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CASTLES IN THE AIR BY MRS. GORE.

IN ONE VOLUME.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. GORE.

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CASTLES IN THE AIR.

CHAPTER I.

A will most incorrect to Heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd.

SHAKSPEARE.

It requires some nerve to present oneself before the fastidious eye of the public, in the character of a hero of romance. When the late Lord D. appeared at a Florentine *bal costumé*, announcing himself as "Sir Richard Maltravers, the hero of his own novel," it was universally proposed to lay him on the shelf. But think twice, scornful reader, ere you so ignominiously dismiss the present pretendant to your notice. Unpromising subjects have originated capital works: witness the clever comedy produced on the title of "Knitting Needles" by Kotzebue; after undertaking, for a wager, to write one on any subject suggested.

Insignificant, moreover, as you may presume me, if not exactly "*la rose, j'ai vécu avec elle.*" In these days of movement and fusion, the human particles of society become so strangely jostled together that "the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe;" and, though the little I have to tell of myself may be insufficient to command attention, I have as much right to be regarded — having been the companion of the most illustrious and eminent in the land — as Shakspeare's chair, to be sold at a guinea an inch to be cut up into snuff-boxes.

But not to hold you by the button too peremptorily, dear public, on the threshold of my adventures, let me present myself to your acquaintance as succinctly as King Hamlet's ghost in accosting the Prince his son; as Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, only son of a Lieutenant-colonel of that name, who died early

in the present century, in command of a crack regiment of hussars, — still of so fiery a reputation that it may be as well to leave it nameless.

Jealous of her husband's posthumous renown, or perhaps ambitious of a pension, my mother was never weary of protesting that he fell a victim to the results of a wound received in the Egyptian campaign. Perhaps so. But though his death occurred amidst the heroisms of the Peninsular War, the gallant — no matter what — happened at the time of his decease to be eating its turtle, and drinking its lime-punch in peace and great plenty at Bristol; and the regimental surgeons decided the poor Colonel's malady to be gout!

I have nothing to urge to the contrary. When the last military honours were rendered to my poor father, I was an infant in arms; three years younger than two sisters, whom the garrison sincerely pitied the young widow for having to maintain out of a jointure of eight hundred a year.

Considering how young a widow she was, and that the perpetual spectacle of hussar pelisses, shakos and moustachios, is apt to dazzle and bewilder the female eye, Mrs. Powerscourt made exemplary proof of prudence. Instead of hazarding the struggle of London life, or frittering away her means in the penurious gentility of a watering-place, she settled at once in the country; hired what the house-agents call "a small, compact residence in an excellent neighbourhood, fit for the immediate occupation of a genteel family;" and cut all further connection with the

Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war.

Poor soul! She must have been a sadly victimized wife, if I am to judge of her conjugal resignation by her maternal subservience. The first thing I can remember is the tyranny exercised by my sisters, Dora and Emily, over a quiet gentlewoman in deep mourning, who, when not poring over an account-book, was weeping over a volume of occasional sermons. Not but that the account-books also had their share of tears. For she had a *hard matter*, I have since understood, to bring my father's affairs *into shape*.

But by the time her toils as executrix were at an end, it proved as difficult to reduce Dora and Emily to order, as the Colonel's entanglements. The girls had been spoiled by their father; who compensated himself for his strictness of regimental discipline by the utmost laxity at home. Though he affected to dress the girls in uniform, and compelled my mother to bring them to every parade and review, to accustom them, as he said, to the smell of gunpowder, and fit them for soldiers' wives, their subordination did little honour to the corps; and the poor governess to whom they were consigned on our arrival at Hentsfield, to be instructed in the milder duties of their sex, had a sorry time of it. Their ponies were luckily sold, or there might have been some difficulty in inducing them to abjure the military seat inculcated by the deceased Colonel. But as far as climbing trees after birds-nests, or launching a punt upon the pond the moment the governess's back was turned, Dora and Emily were still as much my superiors in accomplishments as in years.

Had my father survived his Aboukir wound, or Bristolian turtle a few years longer, as he had adopted his daughters as pets only as substitutes for the son of whom he was anxious to make a pickle, *their* childhood as well as my own might have passed more pleasantly. They would have had less to *un*-learn, and I, less to learn. As it was, I appeared from the first to be one too many in the family. When I saw the light, my mother being forced to devote to her dying husband the attentions usually bestowed on a new-born infant, was not at leisure to think about me till, grown out of season, like late asparagus or overgrown peas, my long coats were an eye-sore; and there were too many cares aching under her widow's cap to admit of my being as fondly cherished as my predecessors. Moreover, since the truth must out, I was anything but an engaging child. A nankin-coloured little urchin, with hair as straight and sallow as unbleached flax, afforded some pretext to my sisters for shrugging their shoulders whenever I was smuggled out of the nursery.

An unwelcome child is sure to grow up shy and awkward. When I *did* appear in the drawing-room, I broke twice as much china, and trod *on* twice as many muslin dresses as other boys.

Master Harry was, accordingly, pronounced to be "always in the way;" and from being shoved about by the servants, and snubbed by the governess (who had no notion of having me and my spelling-book foisted gratuitously into her school-room) I acquired a sort of uneasy reserve so much resembling sulkiness, that others beside my two sisters might be excused the mistake.

It was, in short, so often exclaimed in my hearing at Hentsfield, "What a blessing it will be when Harry is sent to school!" that in process of time, I began to think so too. My schoolfellows might trust me to go birdsnesting with them, which my sisters did *not;* and what schoolmaster on earth could be bitterer of discipline than Miss Primer? Nor, though the limited state of the family finances sentenced me to the hulks of a country academy, did experience alter my views on the subject. I used to be almost sorry when the holidays brought me home to be bullied about leaving gravel-stains on the white stone hall and staircase.

My hair, meanwhile, remained as straight as ever — my manners as uncouth; and as there was nothing in my outward boy to flatter a mother's vanity, I was usually left at home when parties of pleasure were going on. But it was then I began to enjoy myself. Though deeply imbued with the boyish aversion avowed by Byron for Horace and Homer, I had an unbounded appetite for less profitable studies; and as, in addition to the British dramatists and British novelists contained in my mother's library, the drawing-room table was strewn with new works derived from the London library to which my self-governed sisters were subscribers, I was soon as deeply read in modern romance as the most literary of Brighton misses; not only Monk Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe, but all the trash of the Minerva press. My notions of life were consequently of the wildest description. A paria among my kith and kin, I had no means of discovering that the exaggerated sketches which I mistook for portraits of human nature, resembled men and women in the same proportion as the daubings of a scene-painter the simple landscapes of nature; and just as a child confounds the Sultan with the Great Mogul *who figures* on a pack of cards, or, as Lactantius has told us, *after Lucilius,*

Ut pueri infantes credunt signa omnia ahena
Vivere et esse homines, sic isti omnia ficta
Vera putant,

I implicitly believed in all the heroes of the literary sign-post.

My impressions of social morality, moreover, were of the lowest order; and by the time I had added the contents of a country-town library to those of the Bond Street book-box, was not only satisfied that every young Lord was a rake — every old one a political jobber — every dowager a manœuvrer intent on entrapping unwary youths into matrimony with her daughters — every attorney a pettifogger — and every guardian a rogue, but that my precocious insight into the villanies of the world had made a man of me before my time. My sisters might call me a cub; but *I* conceived myself a fox!

I could not, however, conceal from myself that by others I was rated at a low figure. If my sisters took offence at the lankey youth with limp, straight hair, whose red fists protruded from an out-grown jacket, and whose bony ankles from his washed-out nankins, even my mother, whose maternal instincts ought to have blinded her to the trace of my dirty shoes in the hall, and my soiled hands in her dog's-eared British Novelists, (whose backs were fairly broken by being left sprawling on their faces wherever I chanced to leave off reading,) was as lynx-eyed to my defects as though "that slovenly fellow Harry" were not her only son.

Harassed by the perpetual recapitulation of my backslidings into fancying myself a victim, I began to meditate an elopement from Eagle House, according to the most approved rules of romance, for the chance of being picked up by a company of strolling players. Nay, I had even hankerings after an attempt at suicide, in a weedy fish-pond, in our gardens. It had been more than once hinted to me by my sisters, that but for the necessity of laying by money out of the family income to purchase me a commission, their mother would manage to take them to town for a few weeks of the season; — that it was a great pity I had outgrown the navy; — that a brother of my mother, who resided in Barbadoes, had often expressed a wish to adopt some

member of the family. And, as I had now outgrown by many inches the tallest of my fellow-martyrs at Eagle House, so that, in the cold winter nights it was difficult to enclose my longitude and latitude within limit of the exiguous bedstead calculated for the proportions of "young gentlemen from seven to fourteen years of age," I entertained serious fears that, as it was impossible to dwarf me into a school-boy for life, the two girls might eventually prevail on my mother to sentence me to centipedes and Guava jelly; or bury me alive in some ignominious counting-house betwixt Lombard Street and St. Paul's.

Every year of my life, in short, I learned to regret, with bitterer yearnings, that the late gallant Colonel Powerscourt had not survived the marrow and fatness of Bristol to protect his only son against the tyrannies of female domination. To have been out-snubbed in my teens by the raillery of a couple of sisters, is a fact that will naturally induce every public man having been a public school-boy, to denounce me as "a spoon." But I doubt whether the bravest pickle ever turned out of Brocas would not have been tamed down, as I was, by the length, breadth, and thickness of the maternal oration bestowed on me when, in the fulness of my academic honours, I quitted the fat mutton and meagre scholarship of Eagle House, to settle in what she called "the bosom of my family."

"Above all, Harry," added she, after a lengthy inculcation of the minor morals appended by the pandects of fashion to the rigour of the law, "above all, be careful not to molest your sisters. Your school-boy ways are at present sadly at variance with the elegance of their habits. Pursue your daily studies, therefore, in your own room; that Dora and Emily may retain undisturbed possession of the drawing-room in order to keep up their accomplishments."

I longed to inquire whether, among the latter, were included the flirtation of Emily with a captain of a regiment of lancers quartered in the neighbourhood; or Dora's more serious courtship by the second son of Squire Whichcote, the landlord of *Hentsfield*. But I was kept at too grave a distance by my mother *to hazard such a flippancy*. So long as Barbadoes and a clerk-

ship were impending over me, my subordination was of a nature to have done honour to the rattan of the gallant — th.

Though within a month of eighteen, I was as docile as in my long clothes.

CHAPTER II.

This life, sae far 's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy land. BURNS.

SUCH was the feverish agitation of my mind that night — my first of enfranchisement — my first under the maternal roof, — that I found it impossible to close my eyes. The bed to which I had looked forward as a bed of roses, seemed suddenly sprinkled with thorns. Hopeless of rest, I kept watching for the first glimmer of daylight — so tardy at that cheerless winter season; stationed at the window, staring out upon the darkness, with a vague sense that the obscure void on which I was gazing was desolate and dreary as the world to our first parents, when surveying its brambles from the threshold of Paradise.

But when the imperfect dawn that was "*più che notte e men' che giorno*" brightened into the gladness of day, and the features of the landscape surrounding Hentsfield became gradually visible, — distant spires — pleasant villages — cheerful mansion-houses — lordly turrets, — indications innumerable of civilization and prosperity, — my sense of desolation was lightened. An hour before, and it was difficult to imagine that the misty waste contained such stirring elements of life. Who could say but that the scene I had been so despondingly contemplating might not be equally pregnant? Charms which I knew not of might lie enveloped in the veil of twilight amid the landscape of my life; and the rising sun brighten into notice some glorious edifice, or reveal some cozy hamlet, to embellish the waste.

By degrees, my Castles in the Air began to assume so positive an outline as to divert my attention from the pleasant scene before me; and my reveries might have been prolonged into the self-deceptions of Perrette the milkmaid, when lo! a knock at my chamber-door recalled me to myself. Alas! at the close of my reverie I woke to find myself neither a Knight Templar, nor

Prester John, nor a Popular Member, nor the Astronomer Royal rejoicing over the discovery of a new planet; but simply an uncouth hobbledehoy, amenable to the drawing-room discipline of a lukewarm mother and a brace of worldly-minded sisters! —

The knock was perpetrated by a slipshod waiting-maid, who came to summon me to Mrs. Powerscourt's dressing room. But as there still wanted more than an hour to the family-breakfast, conceiving that the message purported only to remind me that the recent school-boy was expected to be an early riser, I was in no haste to obey the summons.

Before twenty minutes had elapsed, however, I was startled by a second knock and a new messenger; no longer the fretful waiting-maid, with whom, as mender of my linen and rebuker of my button-rending, I was on terms of perpetual warfare; but the only member of the household, for whom I had the smallest attachment; — an old gray-headed man, my father's valet at the epoch of his marriage, and now the infirm major-domo of the family.

"I have been up for hours, Nicholls," said I, "but have not yet begun to dress. Send me in some hot water, and I will be with my mother in half an hour."

"If you *could* be so good as step with me in your dressing-gown, Sir," said the old fellow, "my missus would not detain you many minutes."

"My mother is not ill, I hope?" said I, almost alarmed at a message so conciliatory; for, sooth to say, both Mrs. Powerscourt and her daughters, and even Nicholls himself, were too apt to issue their requests in the imperative mood.

"No, Sir — no, Mr. Harry. But she wants particular to speak to you, Sir, about a letter from Lon'on."

While preparing to appear in her presence, I could not help opining that it might sometimes be a disadvantage to reside where the London letters were delivered at daybreak. But on arriving in my mother's dressing-room, I had no reason to think it early. She was not only dressed for the day, but had already received visits from my sisters.

In spite of an unusual degree of courtesy in her deportment,

I saw that the authoress of my days was prodigiously flustered; which ceased to surprise me on noticing in her hand one of those solidly-folded letters, superscribed in a clerkly hand and sealed with a wafer, such as, during my childish days, which were those of her executorship and stormy adjustment of my father's affair, were apt to put her fearfully out of sorts.

"A bill, for a thousand!" thought I; — and I was proceeding to trust that, for *her* sake, it might not be a long one, when, to my great amazement, I saw it was addressed to

"Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, Esq.!"

The first time in my life I had ever seen the gratifying qualification of "Esq." attached to my name! Already, I felt myself rise to the altitude of my tail-coat; and as my credit in the neighbourhood of Eagle House had been covered by a five-pound note, forwarded by my mother for the purpose, leaving a large balance of small change in my pocket, I luxuriated in my sense of dignity, unmolested by unseasonable apprehensions of a dun.

"Who on earth can it come from?" I muttered, holding it in my hand as a sacred deposit I was scarcely entitled to appropriate.

"Read, my dear boy, and you will find that it contains no ill news!" said my mother, in an unusually encouraging tone; and a glance at the table beside which we were standing having revealed to me a still larger letter addressed to herself in the self-same hand-writing, in which my own had evidently been enclosed, I saw she was perfectly qualified to save me the trouble of perusal.

"Why not explain the matter at once, mother?" said I, almost peevishly, from fancying myself trifled with; "— *me* — H. W. Powerscourt, Esquire!" But the extraordinary agitation of her features while silently but perseveringly motioning to me to open the letter, prevented my persisting. There were actually tears in her eyes! — Never had I beheld my frigid, reserved mother so near the verge of an emotion! —

But even after obeying her pantomimic injunctions, and opening and perusing the mysterious missive, I was little wiser

than before. Signed by the authority tripartite of a legal firm, "Gripham, Sneak, and Klose," and referring in every line to their "communication to Mrs. Mary Powerscourt, my parent and guardian," the letter contained repeated allusions to my late revered relative, Mr. Francis Wrottesley of Yorkshire, which were much more Greek to *me* than any thing I had learned at Eagle House. *My* name, indeed, was Wrottesley. But I did not remember to have ever heard of my revered relative, Mr. Francis.

"Do they allude to my godfather?" said I, addressing my mother with a perplexed air. "I remember once asking after whom I was named; and, as you did not seem inclined to answer the question, I concluded it was after some godfather who was dead."

But my mother was no longer able to contain herself! She was approaching fast towards hysterics; and as the letter of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose had announced that my revered relative was a "late" one, I concluded she was crying for his decease.

"I am afraid, mother," said I, "the news contained in this letter has given you pain?"

"Pain?" cried she, or rather, gasped she. "You surely have not read it to the end? Don't you see, my dear Harry, that old Wrottesley has made you his heir?"

"And was my godfather, then, a rich man?"

"Enormously! — No one ever knew exactly what he was worth! — Fifteen or twenty thousand a year, at the least!" —

Twenty thousand a year was, at that period, to me an apocryphal sum; which, like the National Debt, no one who had not worked once or twice through "Walkingham's Tutor's Assistant," could expound without recourse to the numeration table. As some clearance to my density, I fell back upon the letter.

Yes, my mother's announcement was confirmed! Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, the godson of the deceased was appointed his sole heir and residuary legatee; and, by the humbleness of phrase in which my most obedient and faithful servants, *Messrs. Gripham, Sneak*, and Klose, had the honour to tender

me their respectful services on the occasion, I saw that my mother had not far miscalculated the value of my inheritance.

If my tears were not quite so abounding as those of the weeping lady, my breath was almost as scanty. It was now *my* turn to sit down and gasp!

The position being favourable for an embrace, my mother tottered towards me and hung over me in tears; an expansion of soul and body in which I did not remember her to have indulged since the extraction of my first tooth. But as she judiciously intermingled with her embraces repeated ejaculations of, "If the poor, dead Colonel could but have lived to see this day!" my heart became as sympathizingly softened as though her fondness were habitual.

"But how came it, mother," said I, as soon as I recovered the use of my parts of speech, "that you never apprized me of these prospects of fortune?"

"Of what use," she replied, "to foster expectations, which, after all, might never be realized by a man so capricious as old Wrottesley? You might have wasted all your best days in the dangerous occupation of building Castles in the Air!"

Conscious of my weakness in this particular, I gave her credit for more wisdom than was her due; for the truth was that she was as much taken by surprise as myself. After the custom of those who have wealthy and childless relatives, my father had named me after my Yorkshire kinsman; and when, on his death, the widow addressed a letter to the old gentleman, savouring grievously of a narrow income and confidence in his generosity, she received, in reply, such coarse allusions to hers and her husband's extravagant habits, by which their young family were left penniless, that she not only resolved against further communication with the Dives of the family, but forbad all mention of his name. Having ascertained that the poor Colonel's revered relative Francis Wrottesley, Esquire, was under the dominion of a lady residing under his roof, who did *not* bear the name she had so gratuitously bestowed on her only son, the prudential mother decided that it was not worth while to keep up the connection.

The subsequent demise of the said lady affording no matter for announcement in the Morning Post, had of course remained a secret at Hentsfield; while, on the other hand, the old gentleman's private inquiries, concerning my mother's administration of her family affairs, having brought to light that she was leading a quiet country life, that her husband's debts were paid, and, above all, that her only son, his much-scouted godson, instead of being sent to Eton, was reared at a homely country-school in corduroys and a leather cap of the most approved errand-boy pattern, he determined to bequeath his noble fortune to the one of his collaterals who appeared most likely to double it, ere it was again bequeathed to a successor.

And thus, *de fil en aiguille*, I came into possession of "from fifteen to twenty thousand a year!" nor had the airy Castles I was likely to form for the future need to present a more auspicious aspect than Wrottesley Hall.

"Would you not like to see your sisters, my dear Harry?" inquired my mother, after exhausting her explanations and caresses — much as people address such an inquiry to those who have undergone some afflicting bereavement or surgical operation.

"I shall meet them at breakfast, mother," said I, not having altogether forgotten the tone in which Dora and Emily responded to my parting salutations the preceding night.

"But we shall not breakfast before an hour; and they are longing to offer you their congratulations!" persisted she. On which, suddenly emerging from an adjoining bed-room, they threw themselves into my arms; and, as I certainly heard no previous turning of the handle or opening of the door, they had, probably, been unsuspected ear-witnesses of the whole preceding interview.

"Was there ever such a stroke of luck, my dear Harry!" cried my elder sister.

"You will be richer than any body in this part of the country!" added the other.

"Mr. Whichcote of Barming, who thinks so much of himself, *has but five thousand a year*!" observed Dora.

"*Mr. Whichcote!*" reiterated Emily, in a tone of contempt which spoke volumes. And so vehement was the affection suddenly conceived for me by my next of kin, in place of the modest deprecation with which Cinderella's sisters stood aloof on finding the object of their contumely transformed into a princess, that I was afraid I should be smothered with kindness instead of being allowed to prepare for breakfast. And at Christmas, food and raiment are not so easily dispensed with!

I had little leisure, moreover, to waste in compliments. The letter which was exciting such commotion at Hentsfield, required me to repair without loss of time to Wrottesley Hall, situated a few miles from Wakefield; to be present at the funeral of "my late revered relative," and the examination of his papers and effects by Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose; solicitors to the deceased, and confirmed in their functions by Sir Robert Hawley, his executor.

For a moment I was inclined to fear that, — the tenderness of my family having risen so much above high-water mark, — they might insist upon accompanying me on the journey. — The weather, however, stood my friend. — Before noon, came on a heavy fall of snow; and, considering the despatch that must be used, and the intensity of the cold, they consented to let me start alone. The truth was, that the family chariot, from which I had been hitherto excluded, was not licensed to carry four inside; and as neither of the young ladies had courage to attempt the rumble, or condemn to it a brother in the enjoyment of between fifteen and twenty thousand a year, for whom it had been hitherto only too good and grand, I escaped having my first independent journey hampered by heavy baggage.

Nicholls, poor old fellow, was to be my sole companion; and as I placed him in the corner of the chariot, and gave the signal to the post-boys to start for my estates in the north, I doubt whether Napoleon felt half so triumphant on his road to Paris, at the close of his Italian campaign.

Already, I experienced a slight foretaste of the joys of prosperity. In my victimized boyhood, Nicholls had often stood my friend; (for which partiality towards his master's son,

and the homeliness of aspect of so aged a servitor, my sisters had worked hard to procure his sentence of superannuation;) and when *he* exclaimed as we bowled along the great North road, at the rate of ten miles an hour — "Oh! Master Harry! if the poor Colonel had but lived to see this blessed day!" I thrust out my hand to requite with a fervent squeeze of his withered fingers the tears which, in *his* eyes, I knew to be disinterested.

My mind was still too confused, or contused by the avalanche of good fortune which had fallen upon me, to understand *very* clearly what further I had to wish for in this world. But I was not likely to be long in finding out. The sun, now fully risen, was shining upon that vast landscape of life which, hitherto a blank, revealed in all directions the smiling features of its more propitious aspect.

Henceforward, what excuse for building Castles in the Air!—

CHAPTER III.

Dans la plus grande anxiété où j'eusse jamais été, j'ai joui pour la première fois de la conscience de mon être. Forcé d'être quelque chose, je fus enfin moi-même. SÉNANCOURT.

DISPENSE with a more particular description, dear reader, of the flutter of spirits in which I reached the confines of my new domain.

Sir Robert Hawley, the executor of my late revered relative, being laid up at his adjacent country seat of Hawley Chase by a fit of the gout nearly as severe as that which deprived me of my father, though produced by grief for his departed chum of the last half century instead of calipash and calipee, I was welcomed by the head of the firm of Gripham, Sneak, and Klose; a fussy little man, as well pleased as myself I suspect at my arriving unaccompanied by the authoress of my days.

Considering my aptitude for Castle-building, it was perhaps only natural that, in the course of my journey, my busy fancy should have created unto itself a Wrottesley Hall, imposing as Burleigh, elegant as Chatsworth, stately as Blenheim, or noble as *Belvoir;* but for which flight of imagination, I should perhaps *have pronounced like all the rest* of the world that Wrottesley was

one of the finest seats in the West Riding. Falling short, however, of my exorbitant conjectures, I fell out, at first sight, with my new mansion. Unawed by the number of its doors and windows, (which doubled that of the whole village of Hentsfield,) I decided the house to be gloomy without being dignified, and irregular without being picturesque. Old Wrottesley, the most self-indulgent of egotists, having made a practice, whenever he found himself annoyed in winter by a draught of air, of blocking up a door, or window, or even passage or staircase, — there were two suites of apartments in the western side of the quadrangle, which for the last ten years had been inaccessible!

But however unsightly, the house was spacious enough to be almost appalling. I arrived at night, after nearly two days' journeying; and the occasion of my advent and the uproarious inclemency of the weather were so mournfully in unison, that the vast library, which the servants seemed to think a couple of wax candles sufficient to enlighten at such a gloomy crisis, reminded me strongly of the vault in which I was about to lay the head of my eccentric benefactor.

What I dreaded most was that the consequential solicitor, who at present appeared much more master of the house than myself, might take it into his head to propose a visit to the chamber of death! — I did not yet clearly understand the independence of my position. Accustomed to the severe domination of a cold mother and strict pedagogue, my spirit wore the print of their trammels; though the servility of the obsequious Gripham might have served to convince me that I was not only my own master, but the master of other people.

I had no difficulty in extracting from him, before I retired for the night, that my mother had not far miscalculated the amount of thousands per annum to which I succeeded; and, what was almost equally to the purpose, that the executor, Sir Robert Hamley, was an infirm yea-nay old gentleman, likely to leave me in undisputed possession of my own way. But there was a point on which, at that moment, I felt scarcely less eager to be enlightened; namely, whether old Wrottesley were closed *in his coffin.*

There was still so much of the boy in my newly-recognized adolescence, that, if left uncertain as to this contingency, to close my eyes would be impossible; for I had never seen a dead person, and my horror of such a sight was unspeakable.

Up to the last instant, however, I could not muster courage to put the question. I have already mentioned how shy my sisters' railleries had made me; and in presence of a jack-in-office like Gripham, the extent of whose authority over me was still a matter of surmise, I chose to assume too self-reliant an attitude to betray my foot of clay.

After showing me up a damp, chilly, grand staircase, and preceding me with a single candle along a close and mildewed corridor, the man of business paused near the door of a chamber to which he pointed with a sanctimonious grimace, purporting that it contained the remains of my benefactor; and far from satisfactory was it to discover that the bed-room selected for my use by himself and the housekeeper, opened from the same passage, at a few paces distance. Nay, on entering the room assigned me, its bed and window-hangings of dark velvet, garnished with Venice point, exhibited so lugubrious an appearance, that, in spite of the fire crackling and endeavouring to burn in the grate, I ventured to inquire whether some less stately chamber were not available.

Gripham shook his head.

"I fear, my dear Sir," said he, "that it is now too late to make other arrangements. The housekeeper and upper housemaid, having sat up last night with the corpse, have long since retired to bed; and this is the only bed-room in the house which is aired or habitable. The physician of your revered relative has slept in it, on and off, for some months past."

"I am not a delicate person," said I, with an almost quivering lip, "or in the slightest degree afraid of a damp bed, —"

But what I *was* afraid of, I still hesitated to inform him.

"My dear Sir, you have not the most remote idea of the state of the case!" was his earnest rejoinder. "For the last eight *years — that* is ever since the death of Mrs. — ahem! — of a lady *who at one time resided* here, Mr. Wrottesley has not had a soul

staying in his house. The bed-rooms have been kept shuttered up, without air, light, or fire. The chimneys are full of daws' nests — the beds of spiders. It has been the poor old gentleman's pleasure to let every thing go to ruin and confusion. In proportion as he thought only of himself, he seemed to wish that other people should forget him; and I have little doubt that one of the circumstances which mainly recommended you to his favour was that you neither came near him nor addressed him by letter. Several of his other relations offended him by the officiousness of their correspondence."

"Most likely!" said I, inwardly applauding the touchiness of my mother for having taken affront at his first rebuff. "But still, it strikes me that in this large house — among the servants' apartments, for instance — a room might be found —"

"They are not only totally unfitted to receive you," he replied, "but just now occupied by the undertakers' people. This room probably struck chill on entering, my dear Mr. Powerscourt; but the fire is already burning up, you see, and it will soon be warm and comfortable. Good night Sir, good night! — With your leave, I will send in the morning to inquire how you rested."

"Meanwhile, pray be so good as to send my servant to me as soon as possible!" said I. And with an acquiescing bow, he departed.

While listening to the hollow sound of his footsteps along the arched corridor, how I longed to call him back, and apprize Nicholls he was wanted, by simply ringing the bell! But it required more strength of mind than I possessed to admit that I, who was addressed as Esquire, — I, the master of Wrottesley Hall — I, in my eighteenth year, — was afraid of being left alone.

Soon, however, even the faint echo of Gripham's footsteps was wanting; and I heard nothing but the snow-flakes beating against the lofty windows with a dense dead sound, as though muffled in deference to the house of death; or as if funereal plumes were flapping against the darkened panes.

I listened and listened, till my ears became perplexed by the mysterious murmurs invariably produced by an over intense exercise of the aural powers. When the wood crackled in the fire-

place, I fancied that the sound was emitted by the floor of the passage, and announced approaching footsteps; while the howling of the midnight winds sounded like the voice of the dead, calling mournfully and fitfully upon my name. — Aghast and sinking, my fell of hair rose on end like that of Banquo's murderer, or the dupe of the Witch of Endor.

At length, as many minutes having expired as seemed an hour, and really amounted to nearly a quarter of that time, — unable, longer to bear the sense of my solitary proximity to the dead, I started from the chair into which I had sunk with my hands folded over my eyes, and rang the bell as though the house were on fire.

"I am waiting for my servant," said I, to a frightened-looking clodpole — some trencher-scraper or stable-scrub, who presently made his appearance. "Mr. Gripham promised to send him up."

And what was my horror on learning that sending "up" or down was alike impossible. Poor old Nicholls, being "main poorly after his cold journey," had gone to bed immediately on his arrival, with a request that his excuses might be entered to his master! Through *his* interference I had intended to procure a room more pleasantly situated, or to detain him in my own for the night; and when the clodpole, after inquiring whether there was "nou't else I wanted?" departed also, and all I could do to make myself feel more at home, and more distant from the corpse, was to lock and bolt the door, fain would I have resigned the inheritance of Wrottesley, but to have found myself at that moment once more in my own humble room at Hentsfield, with its cheerful white dimity, and green papering, and the chambers of my family within hail; or standing, as I had done two nights before at its window, to await the rising sun.

"If I could only make up my mind to lie down on that catafalque of a bed," thought I, "I might perhaps drop asleep." And I repeated this so often, seated in a huge arm-chair opposite a glowing fire, after a journey of a hundred and eighty miles in *frosty weather*, that it was a wonder how I contrived to keep open *my eyes. Wild, meanwhile,* as the winds howling at my window

were my endeavours to trace in the glowing fire visionary structures akin to the aërial castles I was usually so apt in constructing. Still wilder my attempts at self-study. Like some solitary angler beside a still stream, who, while contemplating reflected on the glassy water his own form and lineaments, finds the picture suddenly deformed into concentric circles by an unexpected nibble, my mental starts threw all my reveries into confusion.

At length, while the night gusts and the smoke of the roaring fire were at the hottest of their fight in the grim chimney, the door of the chamber was — I will not say flung open—for there was no violence in the movement, but opened as by an action of its own; and lo! in glided a figure on which I dared not turn to gaze; but which, as it stood in dim silence behind my chair, was reflected in the old Venetian glass with bevilled edges, that overhung the chimney-piece; — a shape rather than a human being; — being tightly swathed in grave clothes, with even the face concealed from view by a mortuary cloth! —

As the cold dew dropped in agony from my brows, how I trembled lest that cloth should be withdrawn! — The mere idea of the stony eye of the dead fixed in sternness on my face, almost palsied the strong beatings of my heart.

If this object — this thing — should be there to warn me — to rebuke — to apprize the creature of its bounties of some duty to be discharged for its behoof, or error to be avoided — to tell me that it could not rest in its grave unless I restituted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer some amount of evaded taxes, or excise duty bilked! — Still and motionless as old Wrottesley himself should have been, (if at ease in his conscience,) lest I should provoke my ghastly visitant to apostrophize me, — how deeply did I dread the hollow sound of such a voice as must needs issue from those clay-cold lungs!

Had I only deferred my visit to my new territories till the coffin of my late revered relative was fairly soldered up! Were I only at home at Hentsfield, in the green bed-room with white dimity curtains! Then came the panic-striking conviction that the abhorrence which agitated my mind must be known to the supernatural being I had not courage to turn and confront; — that it

might perhaps resent my repugnance; — that it was about to uplift its awful voice to threaten and revile. The hot blood that rose to my throat all but stifled me at the thought!

Another moment, and my fears were more than justified. My hand was seized by one that must have been protruded from under the loath some grave-clothes; for as it firmly grasped my own, a bolt of ice seemed to shoot through my frame. The voice in which it addressed me, however, instead of being hoarse or harsh, was faint as a woman's treble, and seemed to whisper into the inmost porches of my ear. Blessed, however, was that voice, and the tidings it conveyed! For, the night-mare under which I was labouring rendering me incapable of reply, old Nicholls, not only reiterated in a louder key that it was "eight of the clock, and that the housemaid waited to light my fire," but knocked so loudly at the door as to rouse me from my uneasy slumbers.

I woke to find myself still seated opposite the dying embers, whose warmth had overcome me; grasping in my hand the polished oaken knob of my old arm-chair! —

While the old man proceeded to open the window shutters, and let in the glare of daylight reflected from a winters waste of snow, he was luckily too intent upon excusing his own infirmities of the preceding night to take much heed of either the strangeness of my position, or haggardness of my looks.

But even after the fire-place had been replenished and my clothes placed in order for my toilet, I was struck by the sound of a low knocking near at hand, which had penetrated even the heaviness of my sleep.

"Don't pay no attention to it, Master Harry!" said poor Nicholls, when he saw how anxiously I was listening; "I was in hopes 't would be over before you were awake. They are only closing up the old gentleman in his coffin!"

The intimation of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose, that I had succeeded to Wrottesley Hall and all its appurtenances, had scarcely afforded me greater satisfaction! —

CHAPTER IV.

Your 'scutcheon'd pride
Of blazon'd braggartry — your banners waving
Their storied pomp high in the ambient air,
That laughs such gauds to scorn, how less august
Than some poor osier'd grave-heap,
By love's quotidian sorrow freshen'd green!

MARSTON.

AFTER all, it was only the untimely hour of my arrival which had imparted undue solemnity to the aspect of Wrottesley Hall. On the contrary, nothing could be more quaintly and indecently humorous than the look of the place. My wildest vagaries of castle-building had never figured any thing more comical; and when, under Gripham's guidance, I made the tour of my new premises, it was difficult to turn a deaf ear to the giggling audible on the backstairs, or the horse-laughter proceeding from the stables.

My late revered relative, it appeared, had expired after a lingering illness of a year's duration; during which, his peevishness had exhausted the patience of his household, as completely as his selfish moroseness had detached the rest of the world; and his death was consequently a release to other sufferers besides himself. Nobody wanted him back again; — especially after beholding the Harry the Fifth about to be crowned in his stead, and learning that the five pounds, free of legacy duty, bequeathed to every servant in the house, was already doubled by my munificence.

But independently of the hilarity of the offices, there was something strangely mirth-moving in the mere ordering of the house. Windows closed up irregularly here and there, gave the rooms the appearance of winking; and the dismatchment of the furniture to meet the old gentleman's caprices, — the substitution of a portrait, daubed at York, of one of his favourite hunters of early years for a Sasso Ferrato, the pendant to which, a noble Guido, still hung in its place in the yellow drawing-room, while the print of the Durham ox figured as companion to a lovely portrait of the Squire's mother, from the pencil of Sir Joshua — were not more absurdly out of place than the gouty crutches and

cradles, and vials of ginger-seeds and white mustard, intermingled with vases of old Chelsea and tazzas of *giallo-antico*.

A dog's basket had possession of a rich damask *fauteuil;* and in a beautiful octagon vestibule, paved with tesselated marble, and containing eight exquisite antique statues, niched into the walls, a filthy jay maintained its privilege of domicile, — too tame for a cage, and defiling the polished pavement with its scattered food.

"Poor Mr. Wrottesley appears to have been an eccentric personage?" said I to my companion, reassured in my criticism by the ominous noise which had greeted me at dawn of day.

"Very!" was the terse reply. "When people so opulent as my late client, take it into their heads to defy the world, and live *for* themselves and *to* themselves, a tinge of natural oddity, or mere originality of humour, soon ripens into crazy perversity. Mr. Wrottesley listened to nothing but the suggestions of his whims; and you may think yourself lucky, my dear Sir, that he did not survive a few years longer; when his eccentricities might have exceeded the limits assigned by the law to human vagaries. Some time hence, perhaps, his heir-at-law, (whoever he may be), might have found pretext for setting aside his will."

"But as it is, you do not think it possible?" said I, a little troubled: — my partial survey of the fine old mansion having already put me into wonderful conceit with my new possessions.

"An action to that effect would scarcely lie. Strong evidence could be afforded that, to the last, Mr. Wrottesley had one of the best business-heads in the county of York; as, at some future moment, my dear Sir, his private accounts will convince you. He sold an unsound horse only last week to his friend Sir Robert Hawley, to whom he has left a legacy of two thousand pounds!"

This proof of the lucidity of intellect of my late revered relative, suggested in Yorkshire by a Yorkshireman, I did not pretend to dispute. But I felt the less surprised, on reaching the library, to find the books safely locked within their wiry cages, (though the jay was *not*), and covered with a thick coating of mildew. Accustomed to the well-thumbed and hand-polished *classics of Eagle House,* the venerable folios of Thucydides and

Herodotus before me, each resembling in complexion a Stilton cheese, afforded confirmation strong of the surmises I was beginning to form concerning my godfather.

My exclamations, I conclude, were puerile enough. For I had wit enough to discover that Gripham, who had at first welcomed me as a man, was beginning to treat me so like a boy that I began to regard *him* as a beast. I foresaw that I should have to keep the fellow at a distance; and as a means of creating a *chevaux de frise* betwixt me and the attorney, hastened to propose a visit to Sir Robert Hawley.

"Since the Manor lay at so short a distance, I wished to pay my respects to Mr. Wrottesley's friend and executor."

Gripham instantly objected.

"It would be a violation of custom," he said, "for me to appear abroad previous to the funeral."

In that jay-cherishing, window-suppressing house, however, an appeal to custom appeared out of place; and the more strenuous the reasons urged against the visit, the more I determined to persevere.

"If the frost rendered the road dangerous for horse or carriage, I would walk."

Of my own legs, Gripham could hardly grudge me the mastership; but he stated, with many apologies, the impossibility of his accompanying me to present me to the Baronet; having urgent business at his office, which would detain him at Wakefield till dinner-time. Even *this* announcement, however, did not effect the anticipated discouragement. Without another word, I rang the bell.

"Let one of my people be in readiness," said I to the clodpole of the preceding night, who answered it, "to show me the way to Hawley Chase."

This announcement *à la Louis XIV.*, that "*l'état c'est moi*," fully answered my expectations. Finding me determined to go, the wily attorney found it suddenly possible to bear me company. But I would not hear of it. Since he had chosen to have business at Wakefield, *I* chose that his business should be executed; and shook him off as resolutely as shortly afterwards I shook the

snow from my feet, while ascending the door-steps at Hawley Chase.

The invalid — for ill he really was — was cowering over a fire in his dressing-room; but as I caused myself to be announced as "Mr. *Wrottesley* Powerscourt," he had not the heart to refuse an audience to the namesake of his old friend.

Though for some minutes sorely distressed at seeing me, no sooner did he ascertain that instead of the swaggering young gentleman he had been expecting, intoxicated by an unanticipated accession of fortune, I was only a shy boy sadly in fear of bit and bridle, than he seemed to appreciate the frankness of my proceeding in coming straight to his house, and placing myself under his authority.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Powerscourt," said he, as soon as he could command his voice. "My poor friend Wrottesley would perhaps have done better had he chosen for you a more efficient guardian than a man of my years and infirmities. But he could not have selected one more desirous to see his heir do honour to his name."

Sir Robert spoke graciously, and what was better, kindly. His manners and establishment were so much those of a high-bred old gentleman, that nothing but the cart-rope bond of country-neighbourship could account for his intimacy with a petter of jays, and waller-up of windows. They inspired me, indeed, with so much confidence in his judgment, that I asked his advice at once concerning the exercise of my authority at Wrottesley Hall.

He answered me promptly; — and how I love a man who answers promptly, — not from precipitation, but because his general principles are so strong and comprehensive that his mind is readily made up! —

"Gripham's house of business is highly respectable," said he; "but neither he nor his partners belong to a class of society to render desirable his control over your personal conduct. They must be made at once to understand that their mission is simply one of pounds, shillings, and pence."

The next question regarded what was to become of me till I

came of age. Sir Robert, a man of the old school, insisted on the necessity of a University education; and when I slightly hinted a preference for completing my studies on the continent, under the care of a travelling tutor, reminded me so stiffly of the probability of my succeeding him as the future representative of the neighbouring borough, and of the indispensability of a classical education to complete the standard accomplishments of an English gentleman, that I sat rebuked.

After all, as it was clear that, between his guardianship and my mother's, I could not attain perfect liberty of action till I was twenty-one, I should probably become more my own master at Cambridge, than elsewhere.

"Meanwhile, my dear Mr. Powerscourt," he resumed, "the surplus of your income will be laying by, to achieve what you must have already perceived to be highly necessary — the repairing and remodelling of Wrottesley Hall. Three thousand a-year is the sum assigned by my late friend for your maintenance during your minority. But as no instructions are given by the will for the disposal of the residue, it must of course accumulate, — subtracting only what is essential to the maintenance of the estate. For two years to come, therefore, I recommend you to shut up the house, and content yourself with making it weather-tight. In the third, your university career will be completed; and if still in the land of the living, I will do my best in assisting you to devote the closing months of your minority to making your family seat all that is likely to tempt you to settle there for life."

Sir Robert's proviso about being still in the land of the living, was a wise one! So frequently was this long exposition of his views interrupted by twinges of the gout, and a short, dry cough, that, anxious as I was to get at the root of the opinions and intentions destined to govern my comfort, I sincerely wished the old gentleman's constitution in better case.

"I shall see you again, I hope," he resumed, "after the melancholy ceremony in which you are about to officiate?" An inquiry denoting that he did not intend the communication between us to be of a *very* close and intimate nature. "Before

you quit Yorkshire," added he, "I strongly recommend you to place your establishment on the footing you wish it to retain till the accomplishment of your majority, as well as to see the inventories essential for the estimate of your legacy-duty properly made out."

An augmentation of the old gentleman's phthisicky interruptions, satisfied me that he had by this time as much talking as he wanted; and, sorely against my will, I took leave. There was nothing very inviting in either Wrottesley or Gripham to hasten my return.

On re-entering the house — *my* house, — I took care, however, to maintain the step I had made in the establishment of my independence, by assuming a degree of ceremonious politeness towards the attorney during dinner, such as made him fully understand that it was only my want of choice on the subject, that placed us at table together. By my encomiums of Sir Robert Hawley, as a polite and kind old man, disposed in every way to promote my welfare, I rebutted all attempts at encroachment on my confidence.

In the course of the day, moreover, I had installed myself in a suite of pleasant chambers facing the south, on the ground-floor, the window-shutters of which were knocked open, the chimneys cleared, and blazing fires lighted on every hearth; while the room adjoining my own, was appropriated to the use of Nicholls. A trying thing it was to issue on the morrow from this comfortable snuggery, on a snowy winter morning, bedizened with streamers of crape, and cased in a superfine suit of sables, got up in haste by a Wakefield snip, surrounded by strange and inauspicious faces; to do the honours of a hearse and six amid the scuffling of undertaker's men, and the scampering of an escort of yeomanry cavalry.

A sorrowful heart was not to be expected of me: for what possible good did I know of old Wrottesley, except that he had made me his heir? But I should propably have experienced the awe created in every youthful heart by close contact with the pomps of death, had not the officious consequentiality of Gripham converted my feelings of deference into bitterness. The

impertinent air of superiority with which he affected to marshal me in my duties of the day, and introduce me to the half dozen gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who exhibited their respect for the extent of the Wrottesley estate by attending the funeral, provoked me into a mood wholly incompatible with the humilities of a mourning coach.

"I do not wonder," thought I, on the subsiding of those better feelings engendered by listening to the most beautiful of the services of our church, and seeing the dust of a fellow mortal consigned to darkness and the worm, "I do not wonder my poor old benefactor became, in his latter days, such a breathing tornado. Such a fussy, vulgar dog as Gripham, perpetually yelping about one, might make a tyrant of Job!"

These sentiments were probably pictured in my face; for the man of business chose to make his importance manifest by proceeding to his own house from the church-door, to dine and sleep; aware of being for the present so necessary an evil at Wrottesley Hall, that I could better spare a better man. Though my panic of strangeness was at an end, and, by dint of light and warmth, I had contrived to make my portion in the old house as cheerful as Hentsfield, I stood too much in need of information touching every thing and every body around me, not to be eager for companionship. Mr. Wrottesley's servants were of an inferior order, and could not be questioned with comfort; and I am free to admit that when, on the morrow, it was announced to me that Messrs. Gripham and Sneak and one of their clerks, awaited my pleasure, for the purpose of opening the bureaux of the deceased, and placing seals upon the plate chests, I was heartily rejoiced to hear of their arrival.

Before you condemn my inconsistency, dear reader, you must have woke up in a rambling, old country house, requiring a numerous family and proportionate household to render it, even under the most extenuating circumstances, tolerably cheerful; but which, with a deep snow upon the ground, a scanty establishment, and closed-up shutters, might have thrown the dreariness of a Carthusian monastery into the shade.

But Gripham chose to re-pay me in my own coin. It had

been my pleasure to reduce him into the solicitor of the estate, and the solicitor of the estate he saw fit to remain. Having set himself and his companions to work, they were soon up to their ears in business; and to attempt any one of the idle questions I premeditated, would have been as out of place as to perpetrate a pun in a lazaretto.

While watching the crab-like progress of the schedules, for the chance of an opportunity to inquire whose was the handsome stone mansion-house I had noticed as within visiting distance, on my way back from Hawley Chase, Clodpole came and whispered in my ear; and from the air of chagrin with which Gripham followed my movements as I instantly hurried out of the room, I saw that he had overheard the announcement of a visit from Sir Gratian Roxborough, one of the gentlemen to whom I had been presented the preceding day.

"The stone mansion-house for a thousand!" thought I. And the stone mansion-house it was.

But on entering the apartment hastily converted into a breakfast room for my use, I found I had more visitors than one. Dr. Temple, the clergyman of the parish, by whose discreet discharge of his solemn duty I had been so prepossessed, was seated at some distance from the fire; on the hearth-rug before which, Sir Gratian, still encumbered by a great coat and comforter sprinkled with snow, (which the parson had been civil enough to leave in the hall,) stood Colossus-wise, as if monarch of all he surveyed.

"Confounded weather this, Mr. Pow'sc'ut!" cried the Baronet, after a rough shake of the hand. "But though the road 's as slippy as glass, I wouldn't let the day go by without welcoming you into the county."

And by a grave but gracious bow, Dr. Temple seemed to say "ditto" to Sir Gratian.

"Doleful times for you, young gentleman!" continued the Baronet, glancing at my black coat. "But now old Wrottesley's fairly under ground, no further need, surely, of moping yourself up in this old ghost-hole? Why 't will require a month's *fumigation to make it fit* for Christian habitation! I 've seen the

rats coursing in the great hall, o' nights, as thick as in e'er a one of my barns."

"A few sharp terriers turned into the house, Sir," said I, "will soon remedy the evil!"

"Ay, by Jove! and afford better sport than a badger hunt!" added Sir Gratian, from whose rough coat the snow, melted by the fire, was beginning to drip copiously on the hearth-rug. "But till the place is brushed up a bit, and the scare-crows of undertakers' men and lawyers' clerks are smoked out of the premises, better come and take up your quarters with *us* at Roxborough Elms."

"*My* errand here, Mr. Powerscourt, is to make a similar request," added Dr. Temple, in a voice somewhat different from the Baronet's croaking bass.

"For as your nearest neighbour," interrupted Sir Gratian, (who, though the parsonage was situated within half a mile of the Hall, evidently did not consider it included in the category of gentlemen's residences,) "I wish you to understand that, whenever you 're out of sorts with Wrottesley Hall, you 've a second home at the Elms."

I professed myself as grateful as so liberal a measure of hospitality required: — a little disappointed not to find it echoed by the Doctor, whose benignant countenance already bespoke my regard.

"To tell you the truth, my young friend, we 're in a hurry to make up for lost time," resumed Sir Gratian. "Old Wrottesley, though a true gentleman in the main, was such a queer fish to deal with, that he was as bad as no neighbour at all. Nothing less would suit him than to be treated like a crowned head; to make *us* dine with *him* whenever it suited him, without darkening our doors in return! When he found *that* system of things, forsooth, didn't suit my book, he took huff, and at last would not visit on any terms."

"Mr. Wrottesley appears to have been so great an invalid —" I was beginning.

"No, by Jove! *that* couldn't be the cause of it!" interrupted Sir Gratian. "For long after he'd ceased to enter every other

house in the neighb'rhood, he 'd go and take his mutton with his brother croaker, old Hawley, — or even pot-luck with the Doctor here; and when the humour was on him, be as blithe and chir'ping as a cricket!"

"It is more than a year, however," observed Dr. Temple, "since Mr. Wrottesley dined in my house; and then, I saw clearly it was for the last time. He was sadly broken."

"And who wouldn't be broken, living the life he did — smothered in flannels and physic bottles?" exclaimed Sir Gratian. "However, as there 's no blood relationship betwixt you, to make it seemly for you to keep house, Mr. Pow'sc'ut," he continued, advancing a step or two nearer to my chair; "for once the proverb must give way, and the young cock crow another tune than the old. We 've set our hearts, at the Elms, on having you dine and sleep there this very night! If you 're wanted here to-morrow by the black coats, easy enough to ride over for an hour or two, and return to us after they 've shut up shop."

I desired nothing better. The words "all of us" afforded promise of metal more attractive than Sir Gratian; and though I affected to hesitate, or rather though from shyness and awkwardness I hesitated, my intentions were I suppose pretty evident; for Dr. Temple observed:

"In that case, I will content myself with assuring Mr. Powerscourt that whenever better engagements are wanting, the door of the Parsonage stands open."

In return, I said all that could be expected; adding that, but for the pleasure of Dr. Temple's visit, I had intended to walk over in the course of the afternoon, "as soon as my lawyers had done with me," and thank him for his officiation in the sad solemnity of the preceding day.

"Your lawyers done with you? What! the cormorants at work already, eh?" — cried Sir Gratian, disregarding every thing but what interested his personal convenience. "Nay, if you 've got Gripham and Co. in the house, I suppose I may whistle for the accomplishment of my wish — that you should *walk back* with me to the Elms, and send over your man and *things, to dress.*"

"If you will give me leave, Sir," said I, "I will profit by your hospitable offer at a later hour; having a question or two to settle with Mr. Gripham before he leaves the house."

"Then faith I 'll push on at once, and let the girls know they may expect you!" — cried my free-and-easy neighbour, bestowing a careless nod on Dr. Temple, and another rough shake of the hand on myself.

I was not sorry to find that, though he went, the Doctor stayed. He proposed indeed to leave me to my engagements; but I assured him he would grant me a great favour in his company till I was called away. With all my wrong-headedness, I fully comprehended the importance to my future comfort of maintaining a friendly footing with the Rector of my parish.

"A cordial neighbourly man, apparently," said I, as soon as Sir Gratian had quitted the room.

"Hospitable indeed, as becomes the representative of one of the most ancient landed properties in Yorkshire," responded the Rector; but it was uttered in a tone confirming my previous surmise, that all was not upon velvet between the Rectory and the stone mansion-house.

"Stranger as I am in the county," I resumed, "I consider myself most fortunate in finding three near neighbours so kindly disposed towards me."

And finding that my guest did not choose to appropriate to himself by a bow of acknowledgment his legitimate third of the compliment, I added, more explicitly,

"Yourself, Sir Gratian Roxborough, — and the late Mr. Wrottesley's executor, Sir Robert Hawley —"

"I was not aware," observed the Doctor, "that the health of Sir Robert had enabled him to grant you an interview. The loss of his old friend Wrottesley, supervening on his family misfortunes —"

"His family misfortunes?" I exclaimed, having hitherto attributed the black liveries and gloomy faces at Hawley Chase to the decease of his friend.

"A few months only have elapsed," resumed Dr. Temple, "since the loss of his only grandson. With his son, the young

man's father, he was through life on uneasy terms; and now, he has survived them both!"

"Poor old man!" said I, with genuine sympathy.

"Poor, indeed! For in his childless and heirless old age," resumed Dr. Temple, "he is beginning to be as much tormented by his collaterals as his old friend Wrottesley before him. Let us hope he may be equally wise," added he, in a conciliating tone, "in setting them at defiance."

"I can hardly understand," cried I, "how elderly persons, so circumstanced, have the self-denial to refuse themselves in their lifetime the spectacle of the gratitude likely to wait on their benefactions."

"As we advance in years," rejoined the Rector, "the current of our blood is apt to flow more sluggishly than at your ardent age. Many people, however, are of your opinion as regards Sir Robert. For his grandson, though childless, left a young and interesting widow with strong claims upon the kindness of Hawley Chase."

Unluckily for the promptings of my curiosity, my presence was at that moment demanded by Gripham, to officiate as witness when he received the double keys of the plate-closet from the steward, and affixed the seal of the executor to the door.

The ceremonies of the day thus concluded, before starting for the Elms, I indited a deliberately-hurried letter to my mother, apprizing her that she "must not expect me back at Hentsfield for a week or two — as I had made engagements to visit Sir Gratian Roxborough, and other friends and neighbours of my late revered relative, Mr. Wrottesley."

I chose her to understand *not* alone that it was out of the question for her and my sisters to join me at the Hall; but that "the awkwardest of created beings," who in his washed-out nankeens and outgrown jacket, had been *mis à l'index* by his own flesh and blood, was already, in his suit of sables, a man of mark — a stranger within the gates of strange Baronets, and no longer to be beckoned hither and thither at the caprice of self-*sufficient misses.*

As cognizant as Samson of old wherein my strength abided,

I based my notions of self-consequence, and the projects to which they were giving rise on my rent-roll rather than my inches. But already, I was beginning to amplify beyond all reason the importance of £15,000 a year. Untaught by the buffetings of a public school, and measuring my present condition from the humble level of Eagle House, I assigned unnatural proportions to my new Castles in the Air. Nor, had my entrance into the stone mansion-house been preceded, like that of the Duke of Wellington into the Freemason's Tavern, by the flourish of a brass band, and "See the conquering hero comes," could I have been more convinced of my irresistibility! —

I had already ascertained that Sir Gratian was the father of fair daughters; and who, as well read as myself in the Minerva press could doubt but that he was bent on becoming the father of a rich son-in-law? —

But if a match for either of the Miss Roxboroughs, I was prepared to prove myself doubly a match for their papa! —

CHAPTER V.

Look in what fantastic showers
The snow flings down its feather'd flowers:
Such days, when friends are met together,
Are worth a score of summer weather.
Hark! the merry bells awake,
Clamouring blithely for our sake;
The clock is sounding from the tower,
Four, five, six, — the dinner hour!
Come on! behold the table spread,
Behold — the claret, rosy red. CORNWALL.

ILL-FATED Caroline Roxborough! When I forget thee, may my gray goosequill forget its cunning!

Yet there was little enough in her mode of welcoming me to the Elms to conciliate my good will. The glance exchanged between her and her younger sister, Adela, when I made my appearance — a certain screwing of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows implying plainer than words "We expected sweet Anne Page, and behold a lubberly post-master's boy!" — let me into the secret of their disappointment that the heir of "poor, dear

Wrottesley Hall" (as they had no scruple in calling it) should turn out an unpolished school-boy.

So long as they could remember, Wrottesley had been a sort of Paradise Lost in the neighbourhood. Having seen the place only under a thick coating of snow, I had no means of appreciating the beauties which excited so much enthusiasm in the young ladies who discerned none in myself; but by their account, the vistas of the park were glorious — the old oaks of secular grandeur; and as the house, however dilapidated, had lost nothing of its stately dimensions, the neighbours had set down the future heir their debtor for the long arrear of dinners, balls, and archery-meetings which had been accumulating for twenty years past.

The Roxborough girls probably saw little in my "complement extern" that promised an immediate discharge of the debt; for they continued to talk of "poor, dear Wrottesley" in my presence, not only as if foreseeing little chance that Paradise Lost would become Paradise Regained in my hands, but as though it were more their property than mine.

When, on advancing at her father's instigation to offer my arm to Caroline to lead her to the dining-room, I entangled my foot in the fringe of the hearth-rug, Adela made no attempt to conceal her ill-bred mirth; and on my stammering an inquiry, as I took my place beside her at table, as to the pleasantness of the neighbourhood, she replied by an abrupt exclamation of, "You will most likely pronounce it the most disagreeable in England!"

"Dr. Temple, however, assured me," I ventured to remonstrate, "that I should find it cheerful and sociable."

"Dr. Temple is qualified to make any place of residence cheerful," retorted the young lady; "and without suspecting that it derives its cheerfulness from himself."

And all the time her father was occupied in carving and praising the fish of his own ponds, and flesh and fowl of his own fields, the two girls vied with each other in snubbing me so unmercifully, that I had a hard time of it. A sort of unpolished bluntness *seemed to prevail in* the family, who, never having visited London, *eschewed the superficial* graces of life, not from a contempt

of their flimsiness, but mere ignorance of their existence. When they rode, the merit of their horses, not the cut of their habits, occupied their attention: — extreme humility, or excessive pride, rendering them indifferent to the award of the bystanders.

Their plain-spoken roughness, meanwhile, reduced me to the same state of forlorn embarrassment as the more polished raillery of my sisters. Never had I felt myself so thoroughly a bumpkin; — and never more ambitious of self-possession!

For they were amazingly pretty. Both! Adela possessed the sort of face which, once looked upon, haunts one for years: arch eyes, of a colour that was neither black, gray, nor hazel, but of mottled green and brown, surmounted by eyebrows full of movement and expression, though formed by a scarcely perceptible line. Her nose, of the Roxalana order, was of the same ivory texture as her whole face; and through her parted lips, as red as haw-berries, the white teeth were slightly visible. Such hair as hers, had it belonged to any other girl, would have been an ornament in itself. But it was never where it ought to be. A curl was always over her face, or a braid down her back; for such was her buoyancy and carelessness of nature, that she was always untidy, like a person hurried out of a bath, who has not found time to finish dressing.

Still, it would have been difficult to find a more piquant countenance, or lovely form. Free from all restraint or aid of art, it was not in the power of the winds of Heaven to visit *her* face too roughly! —

Caroline was shorter and fairer. Though cheerful, *her* vivacity did not reach the mark of indiscretion; and the changes of her mutable complexion denoted her variations of feeling, as faithfully as the speaking eyebrows of Adela. Less robust, she had been less the companion of a father ill calculated to become the preceptor of daughters.

My insight into their several characters was, of course, progressive; being far too much discomfited by the laughing devil, ever on the watch for my clumsinesses in the arch eyes of the elder sister to know more of the Miss Roxboroughs, on retiring that night to dream of them till morning, than that they were

white muslin dresses, and in spite of old Wrottesley's will and testament, held me as cheap as though I were still the penniless gawky of Eagle House. Nay, though there was a depth of snow upon the ground calculated to determine the most restless rambler to keep house, I resolved to make the best of my way home before my patience was worn out.

"On the wing already?" cried Sir Gratian, when I announced my intentions. "Found out, I suppose, that old Wrottesley's Port and Madeira are twenty years older than mine?—Or, maybe, my madcap daughters have frightened you away?"

"I assure you, dear papa," interrupted Adela, not allowing me time to answer, "we have done our utmost to prevail on Mr. Powerscourt to stay!"

A jade! — she knew I dared not denounce to her father the thousand manœuvres by which she and her sister had endeavoured to render me uncomfortable!

"It is with great regret," said I, as priggishly and consequentially as became an Esquire, eighteen years of age, "that I find myself forced to curtail my visit;" (and a glance at my two tormentors showed me that they were growing a little uneasy!) "But it would ill become me to slight the invitation made me yesterday by Dr. Temple."

"Ill become you to slight a fiddlestick!" was Sir Gratian's coarse rejoinder. "If a humdrum parsonage dinner with old Temple be all the business that calls you away, — (barley broth, a beef-steak pudding, and cribbage!) — let me tell you, you 're a plaguy deal better off at the Elms. Where 's the obligation of the case, pray, except to do the thing you like best? No, no! my lad!. Begin by showing people you 're your own master, or, I promise you, you'll never make yourself *theirs*."

"I have no positive *engagement*, Sir, to Dr. Temple," said I, fancying I was plucking up a spirit.

"Then even let the Doctor keep!" cried Sir Gratian, apparently much relieved. "Lay him by for a rainy day."

"But why should he not be equally available for a snowy one, *papa?*" interrupted Adela, with a glance at the white expanse of *the park, on which heavy* flakes were again beginning to fall.

"Besides, in such weather as this, a move of any kind is out of the question," resumed her father, disregarding her. "Instead of holding yourself accountable to such a scrub-shoe as Gripham, send him over a bit of a note by my groom, telling him that whenever you 're wanted, he knows where to find you."

I was about to assert the necessity of my personal appearance for a few hours at the Hall — chiefly to escape a long morning with those mischievous girls; when, chancing to look in the opposite glass, I saw as clearly as I had beheld the spectre reflected in my dream, Adela Roxborough and her sister engaged in a pantomime behind my back, mutually indicative of earnest hopes that I should persist in my project of departure. And so, — *I stayed.*

By this time, my wrath waxed as hot as sometimes at Hentsfield, when jockeyed by my sisters out of a pleasant party. I had in fact been reared into a permanent *guignon* against the sex! A perpetual sense of aggression had converted me, not into a woman-hater, but a woman-spiter.

I not only stayed, therefore, but, when Sir Gratian, armed with snow-boots and the weather-proof buffalo-skin of a Yorkshire country-gentleman, insisted on my accompanying him towards the lake in his park, to look for wild-fowl, pleaded thin boots and a cold; and with an obstinacy worthy the provocations in which it had its rise, established myself in the morning-room occupied by and appropriated to the young ladies.

They would probably have sought refuge elsewhere; but that, seldom troubled with guests so refractorily intrusive, their books, work-boxes, desks, and piano were all in the sanctum I was profaning.

"Can you play at billiards, Mr. Powerscourt?" cried Adela, after impatiently indulging in the devil's tattoo (with the prettiest little foot in the world) for several minutes in silence. But on receiving an affirmative for which she was unprepared, she seemed suddenly to forget there was a billiard table on the opposite side of the hall.

To show how little I was disappointed, I took up a number of "*La Belle Assemblée,*" (then a fashionable periodical among

colonial and provincial readers,) and pretended to be engrossed by its milk and water pages.

"Suppose, Car, we were to practise a little," said she, with the desperate look with which women propose "a little music," when bent upon driving the men out of the room.

And down she sat to the piano;—*not* on harmonious thoughts intent, — but to rattle duets with her sister — "The Battle of Prague" and Steibelt's "Storm!" — every thing that was dissonant and distracting.

"Those pieces possess a peculiar charm for *me*," said I, with malice prepense. "They remind me of the days of my childhood, when my sisters were little girls, learning music with their governess."

Both started from the piano as if touched home by the sarcasm; and in the course of the next ten minutes, I found myself benefited by the attack. Girls are less apt to quiz a man who has sisters of his own. They look upon him as one of the initiated, and are afraid of retaliation.

"There are young ladies, then, in your family, Mr. Powerscourt?" said Adela, taking up her work, and quietly assuming a place at no great distance from me, in an arm-chair. "Why did you not tell us so at first? In this remote part of the country, we unterstand the value of such an acquisition to society. How old are they?"

"As they may sooner or later visit this neighbourhood, it would scarcely be fair to tell," said I, overjoyed to find the lioness suddenly tamed.

"Old maids then!" she exclaimed. "No other woman is at the trouble of concealing her age."

"They are not *children*, Miss Roxborough," said I. "They have been some time in the world: long enough, indeed, to have learned the grand secret of the value of good manners. Still, I will not call them old, since they are but two or three years your senior."

"Why, how do you know our ages?" demanded Adela, a *little piqued.*

"By the pains you take to make me feel myself a boy, who am a year older than you are!" was my biting reply.

"I see you have profited by papa's lesson to you — to make yourself other people's master by proving that you are your own," retorted Adela, with a better humoured laugh than I expected. "But instead of whetting our wits against each other, suppose you afford us a rational account of the Miss Powerscourts. — Are they pretty — clever — accomplished — agreeable?"

"Handsome, and consequently not pretty," said I, still labouring to throw off the imputation of cubbishness, which I knew I deserved; "and they would perhaps be more agreeable, if less accomplished. It requires miracles of beauty to obtain absolution for the 'Battle of Prague!' But I need not insist *very* largely on their merits or demerits," said I, perceiving that the girls looked as crestfallen and surprised as the wanton Margaritta of 'Rule a Wife and have a Wife,' at the sudden *sortie* of Leon; "for as I shall not reside at Wrottesley for the next three years, Dora and Emily will, by that time, have homes of their own."

"Not reside at Wrottesley for the next three years!" exclaimed Adela, letting fall her work into her lap, and the expression of her wicked eye showing her to be at once relieved and disappointed. — "Why, what are you to do with yourself in the interval?"

"To be licked into shape!" said I, repeating an expression I had overheard her whisper to her father the day before, a few minutes after my arrival, when Sir Gratian inquired what she thought of me. "I shall be at Cambridge till the attainment of my majority."

"So that, after all, dear Car," said Miss Roxborough, addressing her sister, "the old place will remain as much 'Paradise Lost' as ever! We reckoned, you see, without our host."

"Say rather, without your guest," I retorted. "But when he returns to Yorkshire, to settle at Wrottesley for good —"

"There shall be a bonfire at Roxborough Elms, whose blaze shall be seen for thirty miles round!" cried Sir Gratian, who, having entered the room unobserved, had overheard our last few sentences. "But how have you been using him, girls? What

have you been doing to give my young friend such a spice of Yorkshire as will tempt him back to it again?" added he.

And as they had no good account to render of themselves, and I was still too nettled by their malice to assist them out of the scrape, the jolly old Baronet set them down again to the piano.

The music in which his soul delighted being, luckily, of a less tumultuous nature than that they had inflicted upon me, they now sang some simple Scotch ballads, and a few old-fashioned duets of Arne's, with much taste and feeling. It was as provoking as it was inexplicable that these two pretty, merry, sweet-voiced girls should be so bent on converting me into an enemy!—

Before dinner was over, however, they humanized a little. After toasting Church and King with Sir Gratian, I announced so positively my intention to return and finish my business at Wrottesley the following day, ("because next morning I was to start for the south,") that they probably blushed to have afforded me so poor an impression of the courtesies of the county.

In the course of the evening, I was permitted to establish myself sociably beside their work-table.

"You must come again next summer, and have a look at your new place when the leaves are on the trees, Mr. Powerscourt," said Adela.

"And pray bring your sisters with you," added Caroline. "Having now made acquaintance, our next step, I hope, will be to make friends."

But I was not to be cajoled by a few civil words. I was not such a *serin* as to sing for a lump of sugar. After assuring them that I left my sisters at liberty to choose acquaintance and friends for themselves, I hurried to the billiard-room in search of Sir Gratian, who, thanks to the frosty weather and heady port — to say nothing of a glass of ale with his Stilton such as might have made a teetotum of the head of Professor Whewell — was somewhat hazy. He submitted, however, to be roused up from the pretended perusal of the "York Courant," over which he had fallen asleep; and be beaten for the remainder of the evening by a tyro possessing so many hundreds of acres contiguous to his

Next morning, I was off before breakfast, leaving my written adieux. "Letters of business," or some such piece of stereotyped humbug, "called me away."

I cannot but admit, however, that cheerless as Wrottesley appeared when I quitted it, it seemed all the duller for having left behind me the jovial familiarity of Sir Gratian, and the sweet faces attached to his uncouth figure, like Ariel to Prospero's.

Gripham seemed surprised to see me back so soon. But he was doing his duty in my absence. I found him and his myrmidons busily at work. As my confidence was not to be had on easier terms, he appeared determined to earn it.

He was, perhaps, as much aggrieved by my unexpected *hauteur*, as I by the sarcastic affability of the Miss Roxboroughs. However cringingly the neighbourhood might be prepared to welcome the heir of Wrottesley Hall, Gripham, who had recently held in his hands that unlucky old letter from my mother, appealing to the kindness of her husband's wealthy relative in the early and more distressed portion of her widowhood; Gripham, who knew me for what I was, and as the drawer-up of my godfather's will, was witness to his vacillations of mind in the selection of an heir, had some pretext for resenting my sudden assumption of consequence.

But what had I to fear from his resentment? All the king's horses and all the king's men, could not rend asunder the parchments constiuting me autocrat of Wrottesley and its territories!—

"I so little expected you home yesterday, Sir," said he, on my referring to the message I had despatched from the Elms, "that, judging you would be in haste to return to your family, (since the state of the country affords small temptation to remain in this cheerless house), I profited by your absence to proceed to Hawley Chase and draw up, under Sir Robert's directions, a statement of his views and intentions, as they were modified in your recent interview. To avoid any future misunderstanding, you should know what you have to count upon."

I tried to look as if I thought Sir Robert ought to have communicated his intentions in person; and that *his* word would have sufficed me. But this did not prevent Gripham from proceeding

to recite aloud, with legal circumstantiality, a manifesto, the tediousness of which the reader may be spared; purporting that I was to enjoy an allowance of three thousand per annum, paid quarterly in advance, with a gratuity of a thousand guineas by way of outfit; the house and establishment at Wrottesley to be kept up on an economical footing; and, in due time, steps to be taken for the restoration of the place.

Gripham took such especial care to inform me, by the by, that the sum destined for the purchase of equipages, horses, and dressing-boxes was vouchsafed at *his* suggestion, that I could not but feel a little ashamed of my previous ungraciousness. After all, he might not be a pettifogger. After all, in spite of the Minerva Press, there might possibly exist one honest lawyer. For how was my inexperience to conjecture how much it was his interest to inoculate me with expensive tastes, by supplying the means of obtaining credit, (a shadow for which substance must be pre-existent); or that his surest chance of converting me into his most obedient humble servant, was by starting me in perfect independence? —

CHAPTER VI.

Lors même que, fasciné par de gracieuses lueurs, on se flatte d'avoir réalisé une portion de son rêve et qu'on s'abandonne à en jouir, le côté des amours-propres se fait bientôt jour, et corrompt les douceurs les mieux apprêtées. De toutes les affections subtiles, il sort inévitablement quelque chose d'amer. SAINTE BEUVE.

If of anti-didactic frame of mind, dear reader, be pleased to turn the leaf, and skip to the following page: — the concluding phrase of the foregoing chapter having thrown me into a fit of musing, out of which my mind must work its way, through a fog of doubts and misgivings, to its wonted lucidity.

Even aided by my present grayness of beard, and squareness of toes, I confess I have never satisfied my conscience touching the age at which it behoves parents and guardians to inaugurate their charge into that vitiating science called knowledge of the world: — or whether at all! As regards myself, were my life to begin again, rather would I have to struggle through every degree *of dupehood, leaving* a portion of my fleece on all the brambles

of this briary world, than have my illusions prematurely destroyed.

Such glorious things as they are, those illusions of youth, — stars upon the firmament, blossoms upon the bough! — destined, perhaps, by that creative Power which calls nothing into existence in vain, to protect — like the blossoms of our gardens — the germinating fruit beneath, till fully set and perfected. Tear away the petals prematurely, or wither them by an untimely storm, and blight and barrenness ensue! — Even so doth the wary youth become a designing man; while the girl who in her sunny spring-tide believes only in realities, matures into scepticism at last.

In my own case, the forewarning against the ill-intent of my fellow-creatures usually bestowed by some canny grandsire, knowing old aunt, or spectacled guardian, was derived from the sharp-witted apothegms of the school of modern fiction, — (whose grovelling materialism is not its most pernicious characteristic;) — and, encrusted by a self-conceited contempt of human nature, I dared not give way to the expansion of feeling which such a situation as mine ought to have called forth, lest I should become the dupe of my own emotions.

Like the ungodly of patriarchal times, whose first effort on their restoration to the enjoyment of the earth from whose surface the waters of strife had scarcely subsided, was to build themselves a lofty refuge for future security, hardly had I emerged from the depths of my penurious obscurity, before I began to fortify myself in a watch-tower against the machinations of imaginary enemies.

Of the foresight which had driven me from the Elms, however, I very soon repented. I would have given worlds to make my way back again, had I only known how. The arch countenance of Adela, and sweet face of Caroline, haunted me wherever I went, — fluttering before my eyes like winged cherubim. But what chance that Sir Gratian would ride or stalk after me through the snow, to recall me to the warm fireside I had so ungratefully deserted, like Louis XIV., when he fetched back the fugitive Louise de la Vallière from Chaillot to Versailles?

Any design I might entertain of prolonging my sojourn in Yorkshire, on the other hand, was coolly negatived by Gripham. He chose to attribute my speedy return to Wrottesley to my anxiety to rejoin my family.

"I fully enter into your feelings, my dear Sir," said he. "In the present state of the weather, there is nothing to detain you here; and in a comfortable post-chaise, at *your* years, what matters a few degrees more or less of cold?"

For a moment, I was ass enough to fancy that because he saw no reason why I should stay, I must needs go! But a happy pretext suggested itself.

"As I dine to-day with Dr. Temple," said I, as coolly as though the arrangement were an understood thing, "I have still some chance of a thaw for my journey."

To the Parsonage accordingly I betook myself; and *at* the Parsonage was so warmly welcomed, that I congratulated myself on having been induced by circumstances to fulfil an engagement I ought under *no* circumstances to have neglected; more particularly as Temple's housekeeping, so far from involving barley broth or cribbage, was on a far more gentlemanly footing than that of his Hecatomb-serving neighbour at the Elms; and still more particularly because, the Doctor being a widower and his children still in the nursery, there was nothing to distract my reminiscences of the two fair faces which had taken possession of my vacant mind.

My host was pleasanter and more sociable than, at that period of my life, I had supposed compatible with the rigorism of a black coat. Not that he ever forgot its colour. On the contrary, even in his most communicative moments, Dr. Temple spoke like one accustomed to teach from the pulpit, and deal with younger people than himself. But there was no reserve about him. Intending no offence, he never seemed in fear of giving it. He called both men and things by their right names, let who *would* be bystanding; — by which means, he obtained my perfect confidence. I hate a fellow who talks to you as though there were an iron closet in his mind, which, like a miser's store, he unlocks *only when alone!* —

I saw he was as much surprised as Gripham at my early departure from the Elms. But *he* spoke out.

"I did not think," said he, "Sir Gratian would let you off so easily."

"A hospitable old gentleman enough," said I, with affected unconcern; "but more jovial, I should think, than is compatible with so limited a neighbourhood."

"Oh! there is society enough, hereabouts, and of the best kind, when the weather is propitious," replied the Doctor, as if unwilling to hear Wrottesley abused. "We have not many young men however within reach, in the enjoyment of fifteen thousand a year; and a man who has a charming daughter to settle in life —"

"Is either of Sir Gratian's daughters engaged, then?" cried I, with eager imprudence, on finding him use the singular number; — for my impetuosity placed him on his guard.

"Without professing much deference towards Sir Gratian," rejoined Dr. Temple, with a smile, "I will not permit myself to say 'engaged;' since the attachment to which you probably allude, has his entire disapprobation. But on this point, pray excuse my saying more. It has already caused such serious disagreement among us, that I have pledged myself, both to my conscience and to others, to abstain from further allusion to the subject. I may, however, be permitted to add," he continued, on noticing my air of chagrin, "that two more amiable girls do not exist than my young friends at the Elms."

The words "young friends," re-assured me. But for this paternal phrase, I might have indulged a fear that, in spite of the colour of his cloth, and number of years he had worn it, one of my cherubs might have taken a fancy to cribbage and barley broth. For I had already noticed a decided touch of spleen in Sir Gratian's allusions to the Rectory.

"Their father seems fondly attached to them?" said I, hoping to drag on the conversation.

"Ay! — after the fashion in which parents are apt to love their children, — by letting them have their own way, till the way becomes of a nature to jar against their own; — as though wilful

children were likely to grow up into will-less slaves. In most cases, fathers make but sorry preceptors for daughters. Women require women to understand them: — women require women to guide them. It is a fortunate circumstance for *me*," he added, "whose little girls are unhappily motherless, that I have Sir Gratian before me by way of warning!"

"There is scarcely sufficient analogy of character between you," said I, meaning to be civil, "to threaten much similarity of system."

"Sir Gratian Roxborough," rejoined Dr. Temple, "affords proof not only that women should be educated by women, but men by men. The spoiled child of a foolish mother, he was sent too young to Eton; and taken away nearly as soon as he was sent, because the home-sick boy could not stand the ordeal of fagging. A father would have *made* him fag on — and made something of him. Instead of which, he was brought up at the Elms, under the nominal care of a tutor and real care of the gamekeeper! — His faults are, consequently, those of an uncultivated mind; and as ignorance and absolute power are sure to beget despotism, — he has exercised a severe influence over his children."

"Has he others, then, besides the two lovely girls I saw so happy under his roof?"

"*Did* they appear happy?" inquired my host, almost inquisitively. "At their age, one never knows what may be the strength of an impression!" added he, half shrugging his shoulders. "But are you serious in inquiring whether he have other children? Did you never hear in London of Charley Roxborough? But I beg your pardon, Mr. Powerscourt; at present, I fancy, you know little of London life."

"I have heard a Charley Roxborough spoken of by the son of one of my mother's country neighbours," said I, well remembering the enthusiastic terms in which George Whichcote's elder brother, a Meltonian of some renown, had boasted of his feats.

"A country neighbour, doubtless, who is a sporting man?" rejoined the parson, in a tone of interrogation, to which I nodded an affirmative. "Young Roxborough, who is eight or ten years *older than his sisters, is a* leading man upon the turf."

"Can Sir Gratian then be a man of large fortune?" said I, mentally reverting to observations I had made on the inadequacy of his establishment and its appointments.

"He has an estate of six or seven thousand a-year. At different times, I suspect, he has had to book up large sums for his son. But he pretends otherwise. *He* swears that in the hands of a man of Charley's infallibility in horseflesh, the turf can never be a losing game."

I had too often heard from young Whichcote, the phrase of "the knowing ones taken in," to have much faith in their infallibility.

"Were I, however, in Sir Gratian's place," added Temple, "I scarcely know which would most vex me, — to have my son a loser on the turf, or a systematic winner. It may be the want of patrician blood in my veins, — (for *my* Temple-ship has no affinity with that of the Duke of Buckingham or Lord Palmerston) — but I confess I see no great difference between the turf, adopted as a trade, and any other species of commerce. On the contrary, as bringing a man in contact with all that is lowest and coarsest, and involving manœuvres the vilest, — nothing can be more debasing. — I would as soon make a footman of a son of mine, as bring him up to the turf!"

I was a little confounded, George Whichcote, my intended brother-in-law, was on the turf! But what should I have felt had I then commenced the apprenticeship through which, at Newmarket and Tattersall's, I have since struggled!

"It often amuses me," added Temple, "that is, it used to amuse me when I still frequented the Elms, to hear Sir Gratian and his son inveighing against the impossibility of admitting into their society the wealthy clothiers and other manufacturers with which this neighbourhood abounds, — though engaged in traffic much more ignoble!"

"Is Mr. Roxborough as handsome as his sisters?" said I, not feeling quite competent to the moralities of the case.

"One of the finest young fellows in England! Handsome to a a proverb — too handsome, considering his habits and pursuits," replied the uncompromising Temple. "I should even like him

better, I think, were he less prepossessing. I loathe the fascination of a man who makes friends only to outreach them. Do you remember the Venetian proverb —

Di chi mi fido, guardami Dio!
Di chi *non* mi fido, mi guarderò io."

"And does he spend much time at the Elms?" I inquired, by way of silencing the parson's unknown tongue.

"The time for which he has no better engagement. But that is little enough: — for Mr. Roxborough is as popular as he is handsome. He has been less at home, too, since the girls grew up; — being forced to greater circumspection in the companions he brings with him. The bad company he frequents would be *too* bad for his sisters."

"And the good?"

"If by good you mean fine people, as regards *them* the fashionable Charley considers his sisters completely below par. His respect for his father, such as it is, arises from Sir Gratian's knowledge of horseflesh: — a Yorkshire instinct, which the old gentleman possesses in a supreme degree."

"I must take a few lessons at Newmarket, while I am at Cambridge, to fit me for the society of my future neighbour!" said I, laughing.

"At Cambridge, I trust, you will find better subjects of study," was his grave rejoinder. On which hint, he dismissed the Elms from further discussion; and began to question me about my projects. On hearing my intention to enter myself immediately at the university, he even ventured to give me some advice, and offer certain letters of introduction; which eventually served to draw down upon me the most unrelenting civility from several of the great dons whom I would fain have left in blissful ignorance of my existence.

My pillow that night — thanks to the parson's hints, and the fluttering of cherubic pinions round my head — was far more sleepless than the night preceding. Do what I would, my cherubim were three in number; the supernumerary cherub sometimes yoking itself to the snow-white wing of Caroline — *sometimes to that of* Adela. And according as it fluttered, so

veered my inclination. The moment I conceived Car to be the engaged cherub, *she* was the object of my idolatry. But as soon as Adela hovered near me in the dual number, she, in her turn, became the cherub of my heart.

What would I have given, that I had found courage to demand specifically of Temple *what* he meant, and *whom* he meant! — Yet, in spite of his single-hearted frankness, when occasion needed, the Doctor could repress idle interrogation as well as another.

I have sometimes admired, since I attained years of discretion, how, in proportion as the physical world becomes denuded of its mysteries, the moral acquires unfathomable depths. Aided by the Titanic ambition of her monster telescope, Science has unveiled of late years the remotest secrets of the firmament; while volcanoes are as coolly analysed as though their glowing lava were soap-suds. No mine so deep,—no ocean so vast, but the human mind has compassed it round about, or dived into its darkest recesses.

But who has compassed, or who can dive into the recesses of the human mind? — Who is able to penetrate the mists interposed by civilized man between his own heart and that of his brother?

My speculations on the 20th of January, of my eighteenth year, were however a trifle less philosophical. All I cared about the human mind, was the portion of it inclined towards me at Roxborough Elms.

As the only reasonable excuse for prolonging my stay in Yorkshire, I informed Gripham of my intention to take leave in person of Sir Robert: — on which he produced a formal written adieu from the old gentleman, informing me that, being confined to his bed-room and unable to see me, he profited by the occasion of Mr. Gripham's visit to assure me of his good wishes, and that he was my humble servant to command.

In short, I was fairly bowed out of house and home; and let such of my readers as are about to throw aside the volume and dismiss me as a "snob," or "spooney," be pleased to remember, that I had only ten days' experience of wealth and consequence—

ten days, which still appeared a dream, — to oppose to the influence of a subaltern position, a state of absolute nonentityism, — for the preceding eighteen years. A sapling does not strengthen in a day into a sturdy oak.

Nevertheless, when I found the milestones flying rapidly by, as I retraced my way towards Hentsfield, along a road which a rapid thaw was rendering as soft as I had shown myself, I cursed in my heart the memory of Caius Gracchus, by whom those memorials of distance were bequeathed to posterity to remind me how every minute removed me further and further from the fairest feature of my new neighbourhood, in the shape of a goodly mansion of freestone, called Roxborough Elms. Conscious that I had too readily suffered a course to be marked out for me, when, had I insisted upon it, no one could have prevented me from pitching my tent at Wrottesley Hall, a bitter revulsion of feeling suddenly nerved my courage. I swore it was the last time I would be made a fool of! — Hentsfield should find that, during my fortnight's absence, I had cooled into a man.

Methinks I see myself entering the little over-furnished, over-fanciful drawing-room, containing my lares and penates, which I had held to be a chamber of dais till edified by the lofty proportions of my new residence, — trying to look the serene and dignified gentleman I aspired to be thought. Though my *entrée* was as frigid as the reception that used to be given me on my periodical returns from Eagle House, my mother and sisters were not ashamed to greet me with the enthusiasm due to a victor returning from Marathon! — But I received their caresses as if petrified — accepting the best place by the fire, offered me for the first time in my life, as though it were mine by right divine; and to the trio of "hopes," chaunted catch-wise, that I might not have caught cold on my journey, vouchsafing only monosyllables in reply.

But with even these, neither the young ladies nor the old had any disposition to quarrel. Another right divine achieved by my heirship was, that I could do no wrong. They had not so much *as courage* to question me when they saw I had no mind to be *questioned; and on my* condescending to break the embarrassing

silence into which they had subsided, by inquiries after George Whichcote and the Captain whom, so shortly before I left paramount in their favour, I knew not whether to attribute the brevity of the answers I received to a diminished estimate of their adorers, or increased deference towards myself.

At length my mother hazarded so broad a hint, that henceforward their Hentsfield neighbours were likely to obtain less interest in their eyes, as to justify my inquiring whether she had any thoughts of quitting the country?

"Not at present, perhaps," she hesitatingly replied, more embarrassed by my coolness than a mother ought ever to feel in presence of her child, — or rather, more embarrassed than a mother ever feels in presence of any child but one she has injured. "But I conclude, Harry," she rejoined, on detecting a gleam of compunction in my eyes, "that as soon as you settle in Yorkshire, we are likely to see more of Wrottesley than Hentsfield?"

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure, mother, than to receive you and my sisters as guests in my house — if I ever settle there at all. But for nearly three years to come, I shall be at college. At the expiration of that time, my truant disposition will probably take me to the continent."

"At college for the next three years?" exclaimed both my sisters at once, — their awe and reserve merged in astonishment, that the education which had been voted so complete at Eagle House, required so lengthy an appendix.

"Now you are your own master, you really mean to go to school again?" added Emily, the braver of the two.

"You are well aware how deeply I have always regretted that my mother could not afford to give me an university education," said I; "and I have as many deficiencies of connection as of instruction to make good. The bumpkin school which was to qualify me for a marching regiment, sends me all but friendless into the world. Even with your own associates, I have been allowed but a limited acquaintance. Whereas at Cambridge, I shall associate with those of my own age and condition; so that when, at some future time, I marry and settle at Wrottesley, I shall feel myself a little less of a Paria than now."

They sat rebuked. The Castles in the Air they had been building during my sojourn in the north disappeared with a celerity of evanishment worthy the disappearance of an ogre's in a pantomime! — Nothing remained but the selfish brother warming his knees beside their fire; and a feeling of blank regret at the precipitation with which they had dismissed the Captain of Lancers, and discouraged the second son of the Squire! —

It was at least some tribute to the goodness of my disposition, that they could have supposed me capable of forgetting in a moment the aggravations of the last dozen years: their scornful disregard of my comfort and their haughty rejection of the affection which, in earlier boyhood, had yearned towards them with brotherly fondness. The harvest they were reaping, however bitter, was of no sowing but their own. But they had estimated both my heart and head as far softer than they found them.

"And when, pray, do you leave us for Cambridge, Harry?" inquired my mother in a tone of pique.

"That will depend upon what I learn to-morrow at Wilsbury, Madam," said I.

And while Dora ejaculated pretty audibly, "That odious Wilsbury!" I proceeded to inform them, that my guardian, Sir Robert Hawley, purposing no interference with my plans beyond the payment of my allowance, I intended to consult my friend Andrew Grove respecting my college career.

"But surely your friend Andrew Grove is a sizar?" exclaimed Emily, much as she would have announced him to be a burglar.

"I have heard the Whichcotes say they would not be seen speaking to him at Cambridge!" added Dora.

"They would have said as much of myself, a little month ago!" was my cool rejoinder; "though now, I may perhaps feel inclined to return the compliment. But I am as well content to take Grove's opinion concerning my future conduct or career — as *he* was to bestow his friendship on the lubberly boy whom he saw exiled from his home and family, to be cuffed into what learning he could pick up in a snobbery like Eagle House!"

To the Grove in question applied, in short, the exception *implied in my melancholy* definition of "*all but* friendless."

I knew my sisters considered it, such an exception as it was, as scarcely worth the making; for from the earliest of my school-boy days, one of their favourite modes of persecution had been to bring down my mother's anathema on Wilsbury.

The family of my friend Grove was, in fact, the type of a class becoming (the more 's the pity) gradually extinct in Old England. — The father was a Hertfordshire yeoman: — a widower, whose household was tended by two rosy daughters into whose parlour a piano had never found its way; but from whose dairy and barn-yard issued the finest butter and poultry in the parish. Though good-looking, and even well-mannered, because courteous and unaffected, they had no pretension to be ladies; and, except when taking their turn to figure in their father's shaky old gig at the Hoo races, never dreamed of bringing themselves into contact with the world that calls itself fine.

Pride they had indeed; but it was wholly concentrated in their brother. They had another, married and thriving, in business in London. But Andrew was destined to be the first gentleman of their family. Andrew was intended for the Church. Though the Groves had been settled at Wilsbury for more than two hundred years, it was the first time the representative of the family had held his head sufficiently above the world to bestow a classical education on one of his sons to fit him for a learned profession; and the old man, whose knowledge of life was derived from his annual visit to his London son, for the Smithfield Cattle Show, and the two girls, who had never migrated a dozen miles from Wilsbury, being accustomed to consider their parish priest with the same spirit of veneration in which a devout Catholic contemplates the Pope, the notion of having a brother in holy orders, appeared almost too great an honour to be realized! —

The suggestion — when first made by the worthy yeoman's half-doting mother, who resided with them at Wilsbury, and promised to bequeath her savings (amounting to two thousand pounds) to her grandson, on condition of his entering the Church — had been at first vehemently opposed by old Grove, who destined his younger son to succeed him in his farm. But when it was made clear to him that his daughters Bessy and Belle

were perfectly qualified to assume the management of the fifty acres of land constituting his domain, — and that Andrew, who was some years their junior, was too slight and delicate for a life of labour, — he withdrew his paternal protest. The Benjamin of the family was accordingly sent to Eagle House, at the cost of his ambitious grandmother; and, by dint of rare abilities and the highest courage, soon attained such influence in that little world, as to be able to afford valuable protection to the friendless future heir of Wrottesley Hall.

We liked each other at first sight. Who can say *why* people like each other — whether in love or friendship? And from the day of our mutual adoption, our lives had been marked by a series of benefits conferred on one side, and gratitude rendered on the other. Andrew was every way better off than myself. He was not only able to assist my lagging duncehood through the tasks of the day; but hastened to share with me the plentiful gifts he received from home. In the second year of our companionship, I was invited to spend half the Midsummer holidays at Wilsbury; and as it happened that my sisters had just then a project for visiting Worthing, Hentsfield found it convenient to bestow its dignified consent.

That wholesome fortnight was the first pleasant moment of my life! — To a boy, a farm is always an object of interest; and after the dull proprieties of Hentsfield, the meadows, orchard, trout-stream, fish-ponds, barn-yard, and granaries of Wilsbury, with their home-brewing, home-baking savours, — constituted in my eyes a little kingdom. Its bountiful, open-handed simplicity of housekeeping, was so different from the penurious gentility of a home where all was sacrificed to show; — the hearty laughter of the Groves' round table, or the joyous romping of the hayfield, was so much pleasanter than the prim elegance of Hentsfield! —

Nevertheless, when the following Christmas approached, I tried to paint Hentsfield to myself in its brightest colours; having resolved to obtain permission for my friend Andrew to return my visit. I could not indeed offer him the same pastimes, *or the warm hospitality* so liberally bestowed on myself; but I

would do my best to show him that the kindness of his family was felt as it deserved.

What, therefore, was my consternation, when my petition to that effect from Eagle House was met by a decided negative! A letter written by my mother, but evidently dictated by my sisters, apprized me that, having ascertained by more particular enquiry that the Groves, whom I represented as an old county family, were in reality mere farmers, there must be an immediate end of the intimacy! — "Had she been aware of the state of the case, nothing would have induced her to countenance my connection with persons belonging to so different a sphere from my own."

This hateful letter fell like a lump of lead upon my heart. But how to communicate the important part of its contents to Andrew, without conveying still greater pain to his own? For speak I must. In the sanguine trust of boyhood, I had made my invitation, nothing doubting my mother's sanction; — and to tell him that the warmth and hospitality of his family had been so miserably thrown away, was an effort almost beyond my courage.

While revolving the difficulties of my position, and ransacking my memory for precedents among the fictions which constituted my law and prophets, I was spared all further perplexity by the straight-forwardness of Grove.

"Enough said, enough said, my dear Harry!" cried he, interrupting the hemmings and ha-ings with which I was commencing my explanation. "Why waste another word upon the matter? Your people are finer folks than mine, and don't care to have wheat-straw littering their drawing-room! — No matter! — I dare say they 're right. I dare say I should be out of place there! — But next summer, as soon as there 'll be any thing going on again at Wilsbury worth your taking part in, you must make your visit to *us* of double length, and so bring matters even."

How was I to answer? — Time enough, I thought, when the period arrived to which he alluded, to tell him the mortifying truth. But though I answered not a word, the tears that started into my eyes on reflecting that I must never again cross the

threshold of dear, cheerful, sunshiny, open-handed Wilsbury, spoke for me. But while Andrew gave me a hearty grasp of the hand in token of sympathy, he hazarded no inquiries likely to elicit what was evidently grievous to my feelings. And from that day, as by common consent, neither of us ever alluded to the home or family of the other.

I fancied, when he returned to Eagle House after the ensuing holidays, that he was a trifle less cordial. It might be that he was only graver, — graver from advancing maturity — graver from the more serious nature of his studies. For he was now "preparing for the university." Another year, and he was to be entered at Cambridge. And when that period arrived, and he was to leave me alone at the head of the Lilliputian community of which we had been as the pillars of Hercules, he threw himself into my arms, and held me in as fond an embrace as though he had been parting from a brother. Probably because, better apprized than myself of the discrepancy between the son of the yeoman, and the son of a cavalry Colonel whose surviving relatives enjoyed the name of being proud as Lucifer, he felt that the parting was to be final.

Such was the friend to whom I was hastening; — such the honest hearth-side by which I was expected. For I had dispatched a line from Yorkshire informing Andrew of my altered fortunes, and announcing an early visit; — and though defeated in my sanguinary projects at Roxborough Elms, had little doubt that wreaths of laurels awaited the conquering hero at Wilsbury.

Already I was building new castles — though under a roof of thatch.

CHAPTER VII.

And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?
Truly in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. SHAKSPEARE.

MOST people have experienced, at one moment or other of their lives, the charm attached to an object by prohibition. In the stuffy dormitory of Eagle House, nay, even in my green-papered room at Hentsfield, how often had my wakeful reveries *pondered upon* the happy homeliness of Wilsbury, smelling of

fresh straw in summer, and wood-smoke in winter; — the incessant crowing of its poultry, lowing of its kine, neighing of its colts, with an occasional scream from the favourite old peacock when a change of weather was at hand!

The whole scene used to rise before my eyes, refreshing as a landscape of Hobbima, Gainsborough, or Constable to those of an amateur; the sunshine glistering down on the patches of moss that mottled the venerable beech-trees; or lighting up into living sapphires the iris-blossoms whose dagger-like leaves crested the thatch of an old outhouse.

For the proverb that "the absent are ever in the wrong" holds good with persons only, not with things; and at a distance, the heart is apt to yearn after remembered scenes, and exaggerate their charm.

Even Bessie and Belle, who like Jeannie Deans were nothing more than good "sonsie lasses," acquired attraction in my eyes from hearing them perpetually scoffed at; nay, even beauty — from the moment I heard it hinted at Hentsfield that their attentions to a raw school-boy like myself purported to entangle him before he knew what he was about. I was just at the age to be flattered by the mere notion of such a project.

It was consequently in some flutter of spirits that I approached the spot which had maintained so large a portion in my day-dreams. The prospect of seeing Belle and Bessie again, made me almost nervous, from my conviction that a glance at their honest faces would enable me to detect which of the two had fretted sorest over my absence.

It is true the youngest was several years my senior; but this only brought her to the full maturity of womanly beauty. Whereas I was still as gawky a youth as though the frolics of fortune had not placed me in the enjoyment of eighteen thousand a year.

The proof that I had not risen to the level of my destinies was, that I had not courage to approach Wilsbury in the carriage which I had not yet found time to replace, or my mother courage to refuse me. Leaving it at a small post town, from which the farm lay at nearly a mile's distance, I had to wade through the

mud of a sleety, slushy thaw, — of all the varied costumes in which Mother Earth arrays herself, decidedly the least becoming.

I stole in, consequently, through the back gate, unannounced, and like a thief in the night. But alas! the sights, and sounds, and smells of a farm-yard are far less grateful in winter, than in that sweet summer-time when every object under the sun attains a momentary grace. The straw trampled into the mud of the barn-yard, looked like a vast dung-heap. Flocks of ducks and geese, banished from the horse-pond by half-broken masses of ice, set up a discordant gobble at sight of a stranger; and the clacking pattens with which the red-elbowed Bellé and blowsy Bessie came hurrying from their housewifery to welcome me, reminded me, sorely against my will, that there was such a place in the world as Roxborough Elms. But on reaching the parlour, where, in a stifling atmosphere adapted to the infirmities of the doting old grandmother and her cat, sat my friend Andrew, poring over heaps of papers and musty volumes piled around his reading-desk of green baize, — all was forgotten in the joy of seeing him again!

The colour rushed into his cheeks as I hurried towards him with the same eagerness of embrace he had bestowed upon myself two years before. But the momentary excitement at an end, I noticed with regret that, in attaining the stature and expansion of manhood, he had lost the brilliant flush of health which distinguished his appearance when "we lived and loved together;" — and the embarrassment of his manner when, on sitting down to talk over old times and new, my involuntary glance towards the old lady and the girls indicated a wish that we could be alone, satisfied me that I had done wrong to apprize him beforehand of my wondrous change of fortunes. He had not courage to invite me, as he would have otherwise done, into his little bed-room without a fire. The distance between us was now too great for the ease and comfort of friendship.

An announcement to the girls that I was come to dine and sleep at Wilsbury, produced the desired effect of leaving us *alone with the old lady*, — an auditress as little objectionable as

the blind bullfinch moping in its cage over the window-seat. For Belle and Bessie hurried off to prepare my old chamber, and supervise the killing of the fatted calf: and it was plain that I was affording far greater pleasure to the hospitable house by my unceremonious visit, than had it been in my power to afford a formal invitation to my own.

"It is kind indeed, Mr. Powerscourt, to come to us so soon after becoming your own master," said Andrew, reddening anew with the consciousness of our altered position. But, freed from the embarrassment of observation, I lost no time in satisfying him that there must be an end of the word "Mister" between us, or an end of our friendship; and by the time I had fully described my impatience under our long separation, and the number of times I had waking wished myself, and sleeping dreamed myself, seated by his side in the old parlour, precisely as I then found myself, we were Harry and Andrew again, as on the shingly gravel of the scurvy play-ground at Eagle House.

But just as, when approaching the farm, I felt vexed at my irrepressible disgust at the unseemliness of the place, and the cheerlessness and boorishness of what in summer time had smiled so wooingly, I was ashamed to find that it cost me some effort to decline speaking of myself and my prospects till I had heard from Andrew some account of his own. I tried to listen with interest to his details of his father's failing health; and his apprehensions that he might be called upon by the old man's death to take charge of the family, before he was qualified for Orders. But as yet a poor dissembler, my over-acted attention soon apprized him that it was time to talk of Wrottesley Hall.

Already, in short, had the vanities of the world, working upon the frailties of human nature, created a great gulf between the two at one time so fondly united; and, more clear-sighted than myself, Andrew was wise enough to perceive its existence and submit to the necessity. Shaping his prudent counsels as to the government of my college career as though I had never been other than Wrottesley of Wrottesley, he advised my being introduced to the Master of Trinity by a letter from my guardian, Sir Robert Hawley, who was a member of the University. "For

both our sakes," added he, "let the intimacy between us be buried under the threshold of Wilsbury. It will not do for a scholar like myself to be keeping company with a fellow-commoner."

There was something so frank in this admission of his sense of inferiority, that I was very differently affected by it from the disgust with which I saw his sisters appear at their father's dinner-table, tricked out with a pretension to finery such as only served to betray their want of refinement.

I had looked forward to spending the evening with Andrew, in talking over the incidents of my journey to Wrottesley: sadly in want of somebody to whom to relate my lonesomeness in the great house, and describe the beauty and discourtesy of Adela and her sister. But though the old grandame retired to bed, and Farmer Grove sat dozing with apoplectic stupor in his easy chair, the two damsels seemed unwilling to lose their share of the pleasant chat, to them so rare an enjoyment; and I was consequently forced to restrict myself to inquiries concerning the prospects of their brother.

It seemed strange to one whose horizon had been recently so marvellously extended, that the utmost object of Andrew's ambition should be still the curacy of Wilsbury or some neighbouring parish. "If, added to his grandmother's inheritance, his profession enabled him to make up two hundred a year, he should be enabled to settle in life; near enough to the farm for daily intercourse with his family, and affording to his sisters the sanction and credit of his black gown."

A month before, and even to *me*, two hundred a-year would have appeared a highly desirable independence. But *now*, I shuddered at sight of the books and papers piled in the corner of the room, which were to produce no nobler result than what I was beginning to regard as protracted penury. I could almost have quarrelled with the apathy of Andrew Grove, in not inquiring of me at once whether any thing in the shape of Church preferment were included in the property I had inherited. Nothing but the presence of the two blowsabelles — the prospect of whose *round-eyed wonder and* hearty interjections appalled me — pre-

vented my telling him outright, that he might count upon the reversion of Wrottesley Rectory and five hundred per annum; or the far better living in my gift of Rainham, at the other extremity of the county, whichever might first fall vacant.

It *did* prevent me, however. A boyhood spent in a house full of females had inspired me with an instinctive horror of scenes; and I waited till even their appetite for gossip was sufficiently satiated to admit of their perceiving that, the elderlies having been long at rest, the hour was a late one for keeping company with their brother and his friend.

"*Now*, we can enjoy a little comfortable chat!" said I — when at length the steps — to which two years before, at Hentsfield, I had been ass enough to indite some halting stanzas as "fairy footsteps," were heard shaking the rafters over head; — drawing my chair closer to the hearth, as if fancying that nearer juxta-position would help to extinguish the moral distance between us. "Now, I can open my heart to you."

Andrew looked surprised; for *his* was never shut: — a gangway for all comers, — not a privileged enclosure, with hours for opening and closing.

But without further preamble — though I fear with some redundance of flourish — I proceeded to sketch, for his edification, my newly conceived Castles in the Air. After taking a creditable degree at Cambridge, I was to establish my residence at Wrottesley, — become a leading man in my county, and at some future time, an influential member of parliament. While *he* was to be my college chum and the future Rector of my parish — secure of eventual dignities in the Church through the parliamentary interest of his faithful Achates, Wrottesley Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall.

Accustomed to read in my favourite fictions of every obliged party rushing to the bosom of his benefactor, or "flinging himself at his feet," — I was probably prepared to find the arms of poor Andrew encircling my knees, or my neck. — For it certainly astonished me not a little, that he preserved not only his perpendicular in the uncomfortable horse-hair arm-chair in

which he was seated, but a silence of some moments', or rather minutes' duration.

To do him justice, however, when he spoke at last, his voice was hoarse and broken.

"Do not think of such a thing, Harry," said he; (he had dismissed the *Mister* of the case with a vengeance!) "Your generous proposal proceeds from a want of knowledge of the world, of which I should be a vagabond to take advantage. At Cambridge, even in my humble sphere, I have seen something of life; and can promise you, that sincere as are now your good intentions towards me, and firm your intention of raising me to your own level, you would soon grow weary of the abortive attempt."

"You do not know me, Andrew!" said I, with some indignation.

"I never knew you till *now!*" was his earnest rejoinder, — bestowing upon me at the same time a grasp of the hand that made my knuckles crack. "But since we parted, the rough buffets of the world have taught me, among other lessons, to know *myself*. I should make but a bad dependant. Not from over-loftiness of spirit, — not because too proud to submit to obligation. But I must be either myself, or nothing; and should cease to be myself under the constraint of undeserved benefaction. You used to call me at school, 'Old Matter-of-fact.' — You see that I have not lost my claim to the name!"

"And who wants you to forfeit it, my dear fellow?" I retorted. "Do you fancy that my desire to facilitate your progress in life arises from the wish to create a toady — a sneak — a parasite?" —

"Whatever you may *wish*," he gravely interrupted, "such would be the miserable result of my accepting what must exercise a paramount influence over my words, thoughts, and actions. I am getting on well at Cambridge: — better than I would have incurred the charge of vanity by telling you, but for your unexampled friendliness. I have obtained an exhibition of eighty pounds a year; and flatter myself you will learn, on your arrival, *that I have not been losing* my time. The changes you propose

must unsettle me — *might* ruin me. I do not feel so sure of myself, as to defy the influence of temptation. Do not turn away from me in anger, my dear Harry. I am not the ungrateful, stubborn prig you may be disposed to fancy but —"

"But much learning doth make thee mad!" interrupted I, in my turn. "Well, well! every man to his taste. — Since you are enamoured of russet and hobnails, you must even plod up hill in your own way. — But I own I would rather have had the future Rector of my parish assume, at an earlier period of life, the ground on which I hope hereafter to see him stand by my side."

And again a little disappointed at the composure with which my manifesto was received, I was glad to relieve my overbursting consequence by proceeding to talk of my personal projects, and of Wrottesley Hall. But though previously eager for a confidant, that I might complain of the assumptions of Gripham, and sauciness of Adela and her sister, my feelings were chilled by the check I had received. I did not choose the friend so prompt to say me nay, to become cognizant of the slights offered me. But as I had rashly entered upon my story, I was fain to cover my irresolution by enlarging upon the beauties, or rather capabilities, of my new place; and the attentions of my neighbours Sir Gratian Roxborough and Sir Robert Hawley.

Poor Andrew listened, in what I conceived to be admiring silence: and it might be that my previous discomfiture led me to dwell with somewhat plebeian circumstantiality on the extent of my park — the glories of my gallery of ancient masters — the value of my plate closet, and other goods and chattels. For at last he broke out with —

"This would never do at Cambridge, Harry!"

"*What* would not do? — Wrottesley Hall, and eighteen thousand a-year?"

"The smallest approach to a boast of possessing it! Intimacy with a snob like myself would not be more fatal. Among the fellow-commoners you will consort with, are many your equals in fortune, and thrice as many your superiors in rank."

My ears tingled a little at the hint.

"And these you will find distinguish themselves by studied simplicity. Hauteur or pretension would ostracize them at once."

"You do not, I hope, consider my statement 'to a friend' of the good fortune that has lately befallen me, an instance of pretension?" cried I, with some indignation.

"On the contrary: I take it as an act of confidence. But were you to enlarge within hearing of the young Marquis of Clanalbin, or Lord Hampden, or twenty others of their set, upon things which they accept as a matter of course, and as unworthy mention —"

"I should be sent to Coventry, eh?" —

"Not exactly that; — but you would probably become the object of some joke, or nickname, far easier to resent than rebut."

"I flatter myself," said I, swelling into enormous dimensions, "that I am able to secure myself against groundless insult, even on the part of a Scotch Marquis."

"There! — One such phrase at Cambridge would get up a laugh against you for a month!"

"And how is it that *you*, Andrew, escape in whole skin from such very fastidious and facetious antagonists?" said I, still chafing and fuming.

"From being wholly beneath their notice. A poor student, like myself, working his way to preferment, has no need

> To bring his slovenly, unhandsome gown,
> Betwixt the wind and their nobility.

Unworthy to be laughed *with*, I escape being laughed *at*."

"And so shall I! — Whatever you may be pleased to think of the business, so shall I!" cried I, still more and more irate.

"Admit, at least," said Andrew, good-humouredly, "that my first expression of an independant opinion has sufficed to prove that 'Old Matter-of-fact' was right in believing the characters of benefactor and *protégé* likely to sit uneasily on both!"

The rebuke struck home. But though heartily ashamed of myself, I could not by any measure of entreaty induce him to resume his course of lectures.

"*Time will teach* you better than I can," was his laughing

reply. "The rubs of the world are better lessons than a thousand homilies."

But though I affected to assent with a careless laugh, I neither laughed nor assented when, within the expiration of two months from my being entered at Trinity, the rubs in question had been liberally administered. Counting largely on the obsequience I had read of as the natural tribute to such a fortune as mine, and for which the ready adulation of my own family seemed to afford a precedent, I established myself at college on a superabundant scale of magnificence. Having no one to announce my consequence, I attempted to make it known by a display demanding explanations: there was none to render.

In any time or place, a fortune that requires accounting for, is likely to prove a stumbling-block to the possessor. Had I, in pursuance of Andrew Grove's advice, made myself known only as Powerscourt of Trinity — leaving to time and chance to publish that I was Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt, of Wrottesley Hall, and about to become, per sanction of the Heralds' College, Henry Wrottesley Wrottesley, Esq., — I might have made friends before I made a single enemy. But when it appeared that no one could vouch for the origin of my four horses and furniture of inlaid rosewood, — my embossed plate, and arms-enwoven damask, — I was voted a *parvenu!*

A younger son of our Hentsfield landlord, Mr. Whichcote of Barming, who was reading for orders, took occasion to visit upon me the scornful dismissal his brother George had received at the hands of Dora, by causing it to be whispered that I was the son of a widow in narrow circumstances, residing in a small cottage in the neighbourhood of his family seat, "who had suddenly come into a fortune, nobody knew how, and was setting up for a gentleman, nobody knew why." And as the report did not of course reach my ear, but made itself manifest only in the hauteur exhibited towards me by some, and the coldness with which others receded from my acquaintance, — I had no means of disproof. Instead of becoming the object of the subservience I fancied to be my due, even those to whom I had been formally presented by the Master of Trinity (from whom Sir Robert Haw-

ley's letter secured me every attention) seemed little disposed to intimacy. The unlucky printed card of "*Mr.* Wrottesley Powerscourt, Wrottesley Hall," — a pen being slightly passed through the latter name, so as scarcely to admit of the substitution of that of my college, — sent me three parts of the way to Coventry; and from that day forward, instead of being called "Powerscourt," as would have been the case had I passed for a good fellow, I was never named (behind my back) otherwise than "Mister Wrottesley Hall."

It was of course only by the formal deportment of my new associates, that I was made to understand my unpopularity. But when I could no longer blind myself to the fact, how I longed to fix a quarrel upon one of them, to bring them to an explanation! Instead of regretting my own obstinacy in rejecting the warning of Andrew Grove, I was ass enough to fancy that, somehow or other, the secret of our friendship had transpired, and exposed me to contumely; whereas my poor friend's assertion was the exact truth, — that, beyond the limits of his own college, his very name was unknown.

"I wish," said I, as carelessly as I could, one day, after hooking myself to the arm of Tom Whichcote, — whom I did not yet know to be my enemy, and whose wicked wit made his personal insignificance acceptable to what was just then the crack set of the university, — "I wish, my dear Whichcote, you would take an opportunity of introducing me to Lord John Jocelyn."

Affecting a convenient deafness, my friend Tom contrived to make me repeat the request twice, before he chose it to reach his comprehension.

"On what grounds do you wish me to propose the introduction?" retorted he, — becoming suddenly as grave as though I had propounded some abstruse problem.

"*Grounds?* — The grounds of desiring to be acquainted with one whom his friends seem to find so agreeable," said I, trying not to appear nettled.

"Oh!" replied Whichcote, — in a tone plainly implying, "is *that* all you have to say for yourself?" — But as I looked him *full in the face, as though* his interjection required annotation,

he was pleased to add, "It is necessary, however, that such a wish should be mutual; and proposals of this nature usually come from the superior in rank."

"I was not aware," said I, bitterly mortified, "that at Lord John's age and mine, an introduction must be regulated by the rules of court etiquette. Nor was the intimacy between Lord John and yourself likely to enlighten me."

"You have cited a case in point," replied Whichcote not a whit embarrassed. "As you say, I believe there is scarcely a man at Cambridge with whom John is on more friendly terms than myself. But take notice, that we were at Eton together; and that the acquaintance was wholly of his own seeking, and the intimacy of his own making."

It half rose to my lips, to remind my impertinent companion in how many ways he had managed to make himself useful to Lord John, by slaving for him for his examination — riding his restive horses — training his greyhounds — or looking after his boat. But in a verbal encounter with a glib-tongued fellow like Whichcote, I was sure of getting the worst of it.

"The chief motive of my desire to know Lord John Jocelyn," I resumed, — looking as pompous as a President of the Council, — "is that, having property to some amount in the county represented by his elder brother, and of which his father, the Duke of Sheffield, is Lord-Lieutenant, I considered the acquaintance equally desirable to both."

"Your new estate is in Yorkshire, then," inquired Whichcote, with a provoking emphasis on the adjective. "Ah! *that* accounts for it."

"Accounts for *what?*"

"For Jocelyn's fighting a little shy."

"You consider that he *has* fought shy of me?" said I, — every pulse in my frame throbbing.

"Come, come! Don't make more of my words than they are worth, my dear fellow," remonstrated my wily companion. "I have, perhaps, used a stronger expression than I ought. — I mean only that, in a family of such decided political tendencies as the *Duke of Sheffield's*, it is but natural a little hesitation

should occur in coming forward to a new neighbour — without antecedents or connections in the county — with no one to vouch for his opinions."

"Right, — quite right!" cried I, with ill-repressed bitterness. "It is, as you say, by a very different mode of introduction that the owner of Wrottesley Hall should be made known to any member of the family of Sheffield."

"Well! don't forget to speak to the Lord Chamberlain about it!" cried Whichcote, so loud as to be overheard by Lord Clanalbin and two or three of his set, who were standing on the door-step of a saddler's, into which my companion affected to turn after a parting nod to myself. And all I could do was to hurry off, and cool myself by a solitary saunter along the Trumpington road, where my hack, the handsomest in the university, never failed to produce a sensation.

My own sensations, meanwhile, were far from enviable. Though blind to my defects, I could not blind myself to their consequences. Whether my position were the growth of wilful blunders, or an evil feeling maliciously engendered against me, the result was the same: — that my company was sought only by such as were themselves unsought. After all, *que diable allais-je faire dans cette galère!* What need had one, so thoroughly his own master, to put himself to school! — What business had I at Cambridge at all! —

Already I had determined that my first term should be my last. But I wanted some person to whom to announce my intention. I could not exactly play the stage-hero in the Senate House, and enunciate my "I banish *you!*" to the Vice-Chancellor and his brother big-wigs; who, in *my* case, were not the offending parties.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! the fierce wretchedness vain glory brings us.
Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt,
Since riches point to misery and contempt!
Who'd be so mock'd with honour? — Who would live
But in a dream of friendship? SHAKSPEARE.

It was spring-time. — The air was stirred by those indistinct *murmurs which accompany* the revival of nature at the period when

La terre est nubile, et brûle d'être mère.

By degrees, the soothing influence of the atmosphere, and the fair aspect of a world in which, since its last revolution in its sphere, I had attained so enlarged an interest, soothed me to a more rational frame of mind: the evidence of which was, that on re-entering Cambridge, I hurried to Peter House the moment I had put up my horse, to pay the first visit I had made to my friend Grove for many weeks past. I had been pitiful enough to justify his prognostications by making his high-minded refusal to become my debtor a pretext of offence, to justify the coolness I found convenient. But, smarting under Whichcote's insolence, my first impulse was to seek the society of the only man in the university with whom I was thoroughly at ease.

It was dark. So much the better. I should not be seen groping my way up the dirty staircase to his miserable room.

But that it was the voice of Grove which desired me to "come in," I should have fancied it, on my entrance, untenanted. For my friend was so notorious a sap, that the dim twilight, which no longer admitted of study, seemed to announce his absence. But I soon descried him seated near the open window—refreshing himself, after his day's labours, by a whiff of the evening air.

"What the deuce are you doing here alone, in the dark, my dear Andrew?" cried I, taking the place beside him.

"Enjoying the perils and dangers of reverie!" replied he.

"Without so much as a cigar to keep you company?" I retorted, taking out my case, and offering him one, as an apology for smoking.

"Thank you!" said he, more cheerfully. "But I am not to be tempted. Abstinence is easier than temperance; and *I* can't afford to smoke!"

"Not *afford* it? — Absurd!" said I, though my own bill at Hudson's already amounted to a hundred pounds.

"I was cogitating when you entered, whether I could even afford to meditate!" added he. "People say, that reflexion strengthens the mind. — I find it unhinge mine."

And already the cheerful intonation of his voice was subsiding.

"If by reflexion you mean moping by owl-light in this confounded dull room, commanding only a squint up at the sky," said I, with forced gaiety, to rally him out of his despondency, "I agree with you, that it is enough to make a hypochondriac of the merriest dog alive! —*I* have been musing 'among hedge-row elms and hillocks green;' and, if not the wiser, am certainly all the better for it."

"You are your own master, my dear Harry: *I*, the slave of the bitter hag, called Poverty. — *My* Sycorax says, 'stay at home and work.'"

"Ay! That you may play the more hereafter," said I, my mean mind misgiving me, that he might perhaps be trying to bring on a renewal of the offers it was no longer my wish to repeat.

"Rather, lest I acquire an appetite for playing!" was his mild rejoinder. "Most of us are disposed to trifle away our lives, at the sacrifice of our duties; and it is lucky perhaps, that some are sufficiently ill off, to be glad of being paid to be serious. But, tell me," said he, interrupting himself, as if afraid that *he* was too much so for my taste, — "how does a college life agree with you? — Are *you* playing, or working? I was glad not to see you in the party I saw starting from Lord Hampden's lodgings the day before yesterday for Newmarket."

"To answer your questions by order of precedence, my dear Grove," said I, "a college life suits me so little, that I am not likely to attempt another term."

"Leave Cambridge?" cried he, in dismay. "In a fit of caprice — or indolence — or pique?"

"Say disgust, and you will hit the mark."

"And at the risk of passing for weak and inconsistent, — nay, worse," continued he, in a breath. "For the world will take it for granted that you have got into some college scrape; and that you take yourself off to avoid the penalty of rustication."

"I am luckily not so dependent on the world's good opinion," I rejoined, "as to find its calumnies of paramount importance. What signifies the worst people can invent? — What have I to *fear?*"

"Every man is more or less dependent on public esteem," was his grave rejoinder.

"Ay! — more or less — and my portion of peril is of the smallest! Only ask yourself, Grove — you, who are a philosopher — why, with youth, health, and fortune at my disposal, I should weary out a couple of my brightest years in a life of subjection?"

"Because that very fortune places you in a position to make it necessary to the happiness of many, that you should qualify your mind to make the best use of it," replied Grove, with earnest gravity. "From your confidences to me at Wilsbury, I infer that you do not intend to become a mere fox-hunting squire?"

"No — *that* market is over-stocked! Yorkshire is over-run by such vermin. But even if, as I then announced to be probable, I succeed Sir Robert Hawley at some future period, is a university education essential to a Member of Parliament?"

"Extensive knowledge and a liberalized mind are essential; and where is a man's education so easy to accomplish as at our seats of learning? Where is he so secure against the pleasures of the world — the temptations of society?"

"No where, certainly!" I rejoined, with a bitter sneer. "But I am of opinion that he may liberalize his mind more effectually by foreign travel — by associating with men of the world, instead of boys and old women — and enlarging his views by observation rather than by the dryness of study."

"In short, like others who have become prematurely their own masters, you are flying to the continent as an excuse for self-indulgence!"

I was amused to see him thus excited. For my resolution was the result of momentary petulance, and likely to melt into air like the fumes of the cigar I was smoking out of Andrew's most attic window — leaving no trace behind.

"One might almost fancy that some evil genius presided over the ordering of human destinies!" added my friend, as if thinking aloud. "*Who* is content with his fate? — Neither rich nor poor, — neither high nor low!"

"You are the last man on earth to say so, my dear Grove!"

cried I. "You, who disdain all aid or change; and would rather be a country curate than the Sublime Sultan!"

"How do you know that?" was his brisk rejoinder, — either startled out of his habitual reserve by my announcement of our speedy separation, or softened into confidence by the influence of the tranquil twilight around us. "How do you know, that what you take for preference, may not be resignation? — How do you know, that while *you* are overcome by the lassitude and ennui consequent on satiety, Old Matter-of-fact may not be breaking, if not his heart, his head, against his adverse destiny?"

"I could almost fancy you in earnest, Andrew!" said I, a little astonished.

"And so I am! — If it can avail to reconcile you to the obstacles, real or imaginary, in your path, — know, that nothing but the sense of duty to my family actuates my course of study. From my childhood upwards, it has been the pride of those worthy hearts at Wilsbury to see me in orders, — to prepare me for becoming the anchor of their humble faith, and smoothing their way to eternity; and I should consider it a sort of parricide to disappoint their hopes."

"Your vocation, then, is not for the Church?"

"Not as I could wish it to be. Time may settle my opinions. Time, by teaching *me*, may qualify me to become the teacher of others. But in many a weary moment, I almost despair. The absence of all that is ghostly or spiritual in my nature, is a defect hardly to be remedied."

"As far as I am concerned," said I, flippantly, "as the patron of the living in which I hope to see you officiate, I look on what you call a defect, as a first-rate merit. May I never behold one of your evangelical enthusiasts in a pulpit of mine!"

"It was, however, the consciousness of my deficiencies," resumed Andrew, "which caused me to receive your generous proposition concerning your Yorkshire preferment, with a degree of coldness which I trusted you would understand as a negative."

"You really intended, then, at Wilsbury, to refuse the next presentation to the living of Rainham?"

"*Only from feeling*, my dear Harry, that it is by fulfilling the

strict purpose for which my destinies were thrust upon me, I shall ever reconcile myself to their nature," rejoined he, with some emotion. "As a curate, living within reach of my family, I shall extract out of their veneration for my functions, a sense of dignity with which six times the amount of stipend would never inspire me."

"And if you were released from an obligation which I cannot see in the same light that you do," said I, "what would be the natural course of your ambitions?"

"Cannot the name you were the first to give me, and the nature of the honours I have achieved here, lead you to conjecture?" — inquired he, in an embarrassed tone.

"Don't tell me, Andrew, I beg and beseech of you, that you discern more reality in law or medicine, than in the pulpit!" cried I, hoping to banter out of him the truth of the case. — "Don't make me fancy that you are hankering after pill-boxes or deed-chests!"

"No! I have the vanity to fancy that my mathematical proficiency would be of advantage to me as an engineer."

"As an engineer?" I exclaimed, a little surprised to find so great a scholar as my friend was already held, derogate from the learned professions.

"Engineering is the predominant science of the day," he rejoined. "Learning has drained dry the Pierian spring, and moral philosophy wrangled the world in and out of its senses. But physical science is in its cradle, — strong and ardent as the infant Hercules, when he strangled the serpents! — Look at the strides we have accomplished since the adoption of steam, and think of those which remain to be measured! — I regard steam as the great civilizer of the modern world, as Christianity of the ancient; a world, too, that doubles the extent of the heathen earth, but of which it has brought the ends together, and the centre to the surface!" —

"In short," said I, "you would prefer being the originator of a railroad, to a pair of lawn sleeves!" —

"You well know, Mr. Powerscourt, that visions of lawn sleeves never disturbed my mind," said Andrew, in a tone of

grave reproach. "If I amuse my leisure hours by planning beacons and diving-bells — and devising means of enclosing the Wash, or draining the Lake of Haarlem — it is only as you resort to the billiard-table, — as a matter of recreation."

Convinced that this allusion to billiards was a retort uncourteous, (for among the fashionable scamps who had ministered to my vanity by their coarse adulation, I had been made to pay dearly for my pretension to be a first-rate player), I puffed out the remainder of my cigar in silence, and made so hasty an exit as not even to conceal my displeasure. Nor, on my way home to Trinity, did I cease from confounding the impudence of Andrew Grove, in venturing — after the offence offered me at Wilsbury, and the resentment testified on my own part at Cambridge, by the withdrawal of my countenance — to play the spy upon my actions.

Long afterwards — *very* long afterwards — I discovered that it was a random hit. Absorbed in his own pursuits, and unaware of my ostracism from the coterie to which my fortune entitled me to belong, Andrew simply concluded me to be a votary of the pursuits in which they were known to indulge. But I was not likely to forgive his allusion to one of my most signal failures. For I had not only played high, but played detestably.

I frankly admit that "*I* was not likely to forgive," —because the reader may have discovered by this time that my nature was essentially resentful. As yet, I had pardoned neither the favouritism of my mother, — the girlish tyrannies of my sisters, — nor the flippancies of the lovely girls at Roxborough Elms. Was I likely to overlook the twittings of the drudge of Peter House — the yeoman's son of Wilsbury? — To mark my scorn of his reproof, I was almost capable of realizing my vague menace, and hastily terminating my university career. — But I contented myself with hurrying to the billiard-rooms, which, the preceding day, I had foresworn for ever.

My resolution had, I conclude, transpired; for I was welcomed back as a god-send, — toadied to the top of my bent, — and even allowed to win back fifty of the eleven hundred pounds *of which my besotted* vanity and scampish acquaintance had

robbed me. Like most men who feel themselves piqued, I was in unnatural spirits.

"I have got an offer for your bay mare, my dear Powerscourt," said Bob Barker, a hanger-on of mine, whose outward man was more brilliant than his inner; and who was good enough to play the same dirty part in my establishment as Whichcote in that of Lord John Jocelyn.

"Thank you. — Forrest has promised me she shall be sound within a month, and I mean to keep her," was my ungracious reply.

"Forrest's 'I promise to cure,' is pretty much like Barker's 'I promise to pay,'" observed Hetton of Bennett's — whose queue seemed to burn in his hand the moment I entered the room. "In your place, Powerscourt, I wouldn't refuse a good offer."

"And what do you call a good offer?",

"William Grieve will give you forty pounds, in a bill at three months."

"Forty pounds, — for a mare for which I paid two hundred guineas to Elmore three months ago, and who has slightly strained her shoulder!"

"I told you it was no go, — I told you he wouldn't hear of it!" was audibly whispered to my friend Barker, by one of the standers-by. To which followed another whisper, wherein the words "hard-up" were sufficiently audible.

"Just like one of Whichcote's impudent inventions!" retorted Barker, evidently intending me to overhear him. And when his purpose was accomplished, by my asking an explanation, he equivocated, and hedged off, so as to force me to insist.

"Where is the good of repeating any thing after Whichcote, my dear fellow?" said my friend Bob. "Not a man in Cambridge would take his word for a bushel of chaff! — We all know he has got some private spite against you; and when a fellow goes the length of reporting, in the first place, that though in the enjoyment of some thousands a-year, you were the meanest dog alive, and left your mother and sisters, who are dependent upon you, to live on cheese-parings; and next, that your fine fortune

is a mere bubble — and that you have got a few thousand pounds advanced you to make a splash, on the strength of a will made in your favour by an old lunatic, which is about to be set aside by his heir-at-law, so that you will have to refund in no time, which is what makes you, he says, so confounded a screw, — we all know how to understand him."

"I am a screw, then, am I?" said I, endeavouring to laugh.

"Not that *I* ever saw!" replied Bob Barker. "But such is the impression given by Whichcote, — who has some influence in Cambridge, and is supposed to have known you from your childhood. *His* account of you, previous to your arrival, was, that you were the stingiest fellow on earth!"

On announcing my instant determination to require explanations of Whichcote, every man present of course retracted. No one had heard a word against me — no one had *said* a word against me: cases where it is against the general interest to get up a duel having the marvellous faculty of enabling all parties to scramble out of a dirty business with the cleanest of hands.

The only dupe in the affair, however, was myself. For in the weakness of my vanity and inexperience, I judged it necessary to double my usual stakes that night, — and consequently my usual losses; besides throwing away, at a fifth of her value, an animal which was the pride of my stud: by which excess of idiotism, I fancied I had earned an especial right to bite my thumb at the traitor Whichcote the first time we jostled in the street.

One only useful piece of information reached me in the course of my squabble.

"I knew the 'disputed will' chapter of the story to be mere brag!" was the observation of Hetton, in the course of the argument. "For Frank Halliwell told me that his tutor, Temple of King's, had relations in your part of the country, and declared your family and fortune to be unimpeachable."

"Temple?" said I, — my mind involuntarily reverting to Wrottesley Rectory and its gentlemanly incumbent. "The parson of my parish is named Temple."

"*Then our Temple* is probably his son. He looks as if he

had been born and bred in a vestry!" cried Bob Barker, shrugging his shoulders.

"A gentlemanly man enough, for all that!" added Hetton; "and one of the best scholars of the university."

"In that case, certainly not the son of *my* Dr. Temple," I rejoined, "who is little more than forty years of age."

"I remember hearing some story, when first I came to college," resumed Hetton, "before Temple dreamt of a tutorship, that he was engaged to be married to a girl of good family, whose relations would not hear of the match; and that he was reading for orders with the promise of a living from some old man in the north."

"What signifies!" interrupted Bob Barker, — who was in haste to get me to the table. "The history of all these black coats is the same: perpetually on the cant, with their mouths wide open, for the chance of whatever loaves and fishes may fall in their way!"

But though as well content as himself at that moment to drop the subject, it had taken possession of my fancy. To one so self-consequential as I was, no man who had warmly taken his part — more especially with little chance that the championship would reach my ears — could remain an object of indifference. Through Hetton's means, I had little difficulty in making Temple's acquaintance; and as little in ascertaining that he was a younger brother of the man whose bread I had recently broken.

But albeit my advances towards him were twice as cordial as they would have been to any other man in the university, Temple received them with provoking reserve. In spite of the gravity of his functions, he was little more than six-and-twenty; strikingly good-looking; and in manners and appearance, a perfect gentleman. Nothing in him of the pomposities of the buzz-wig and mitre in perspective, to account for his coldness. He listened with an air of pleasure to my tribute to his brother's merits. But the moment I attempted to speak of himself, or of his visits to Wrottesley Rectory and acquaintance with my country neighbours, his nature froze again.— Like the pictures painted in sympathetic colours, which, when withdrawn from the fire, suddenly transform their summer

greeneries into a landscape all frost and snow, — the change was chilling.

Conceiving that I had done the young tutor some honour in seeking his acquaintance, I was out of all patience with the distance at which he pretended to hold me. Was *he*, too, of the Jocelyn and Whichcote faction? — Or had he the impertinence to fancy that, because his brother held his living from my predecessor, there was no obligation of courtesy due to the owner of the advowson? — Or, in his province as pedagogue, did he pretend to disapprove the company I frequented, and the dissolute habits I was adopting?

The prepossession with which his intelligent countenance and gentle manners had at first sight inspired me, soon gave way therefore to my customary resentment. On Dr. Temple's brother, I felt that I had certain claims. — What, it might have puzzled me to explain. But from the deportment I adopted towards him, he could have little difficulty in interpreting my displeasure.

Alas! I soon afforded him equally good grounds for estimating the purse-proud meanness of my nature. — The next time I accidentally found myself in his company, I took occasion to speak of the livings of which I was patron.

"Wrottesley, I trust, will not fall vacant in my life-time," said I, affecting to address the compliment to himself. "But of Rainham, which is worth a thousand a-year, the incumbent is seventy-six! — But I give him leave to jog on a few years nearer towards fourscore: the friend for whom I intend it, not being yet in orders."

I said all this, hoping to make the poor tutor's mouth water, and teach him to be more civil to one with such capital preferment in his gift. Instead of which, he suddenly grew white as death, — probably from suppressed rage, at hearing the dignity of his cloth so unceremoniously dealt with. So far from amending his incivility, from that day forward, he scarcely returned my bow! —

CHAPTER IX.

When the Sun confided the guidance of his chariot to Phæton, — 'Don't soar too high,' said he: 'you will set the skies on fire. But don't sink too low, or you will reduce the earth to ashes.' MONTESQUIEU.

PROFESSIONAL men are fond of recurring to their college life; ejaculating with the madrigalist,

Oh! the merry days —
The merry days when I was young!

inasmuch as the days of their grave maturity are any thing but merry. — But a man whose fate it is to walk in the sunshine of the world, is apt to look back with pity to the shallow pretence at manly virtue or manly vice which strutted under his cap and gown. Drunken brawls, break-neck exploits on broken-down hunters, and the jarring of empty braggartry between fools who, if

Men are but children of a larger growth,

are the most froward of overgrown children, occupy at least three-fourths of the time supposed to be devoted to the cultivation of divine philosophy by such fellow-commoners as, like myself, rejoice in empty heads and pockets overflowing.

Not that nature had predestined me for a blockhead. At Eagle House, I was always beforehand with my class; and had it been my fate to be cheered on in my studies by father, uncle, or guardian, or any other individual dignified by broad-cloth and beaver, I might have turned out a scholar of decent note. — But at Hentsfield, my classics and dirty boots were lumped together as nuisances; scholarship being accounted by my mother and sisters a disease of boyhood of the measles-and-hooping-cough order, which it was to be hoped I should take kindly and get through without giving too much trouble.

There was not enough of the genius in me to resent their want of enlightenment; and as my chosen companions were for the most part dashing dunces, who knew nothing but what they guessed, and whose only art was that of concealing their ignorance, my utmost ambition at college was to scramble through my terms disgracing myself as little, and enjoying myself as much as possible. When, therefore, I found my object de-

feated of forming the brilliant connections I had read and dreamed of, I had no nobler resource to fall back upon.

By good luck, however, my vices served me better than my virtues. The resentments fretting within me having flung me — precisely as was foreseen by Bob Barker and Co.—into a course of dissipation where deep drinking and deep dicing afforded an excitement outblazing even the heat of my wrath, I found myself, on the eve of the expiration of my first term, as deeply in debt as in dudgeon. — My liabilities, indeed, were such as might easily have been accommodated by bills: both Barker and Hetton, and others of their clique, being chiefly intent on keeping me in their clutches. But something of my father's son glowed just then in my veins, suggesting that, with such a fortune as mine, the imputation of debt was unpardonable; and that although any explanation of my situation to Messrs. Gripham and Klose would lay me under obligations to them I should infallibly repent hereafter, my guardian, however dissatisfied with my conduct, would deal with me like a gentleman.

I addressed myself, therefore, at once to Sir Robert Hawley, and, pleading frankly guilty, requested the advance of four thousand pounds: — offering my word of honour that this first excess should be the last; and announcing my intention of quitting Cambridge.

"This resolution will at least satisfy the old gentleman," thought I, "that my folly is not likely to be renewed. He will indulge in such an explosion of wrath as gouty guardians usually exhibit on such occasions; and bid me 'go and sin no more.'"

Neither his gout nor his guardianship, however, sufficed to betray the precise old gentleman out of systematic habits of propriety. Sir Robert simply presented his compliments to me, enclosed me an order on the Bank of England for five instead of four thousand pounds; expressing the most implicit reliance on the sacred pledge I had given to confine myself for the future within my allowance; but stating that even that allowance would be withdrawn if I persisted in my intention of prematurely quitting the university. Stiff as was the phrasing of his letter, he *expressed a hope, at the* conclusion, that I would set apart a week

of the vacation to visit him at Hawley Chase, as soon as he returned from Buxton.

The amazement of my billiard-room gang — (poisonous parasites, deleterious as the night-shade!) — at my unexpected command of money, scarcely exceeded my own. From the moment a load of debt encumbered my shoulders, I had begun to feel as beggarly in my own esteem, as in my more abject days of Eagle House; and as I took care to keep to myself the origin of my sudden relief, not one of them but believed that one of the others had settled my business by an introduction to the Jews. This surmise produced a schism in the confederation; amidst the wranglings of which, their hold upon their victim relaxed.

Meanwhile, the additional thousand pounds so magnanimously vouchsafed by the old gentleman as if to seal the bond of my obligation, fulfilled the purpose for which he probably intended it, — of enabling me to start for home: fearing neither to face those I left behind, nor those I was about to greet! —

The thought of Hentsfield had not troubled me much during my six months' absence. My mother and sisters had so long accustomed me to a want of all solicitude during my half-yearly schooling, that it was not likely their sudden accession of interest in my favour should be instantaneously reciprocal. — But on arriving among them, it would have been at variance with the impulses of frail human nature not to feel a little amused at perceiving how thoroughly the tables were turned. I, who had formerly been Gulliver in Brobdignag, was now Gulliver in Lilliput! — My poor old green room was disfigured by a French paper *à la Watteau.* A suite of sham-ancient steam-carved furniture replaced my straw chairs and painted washing-stand; and my clean white dimity hangings were exchanged for bargain-shop damask! —

Beside my arm-chair lay a showy footstool, which I afterwards found to be a specimen of Dora's embroidery; while a Turkish cushion on the settee was furnished by the needle of Emily.

"You have had visitors at Hentsfield then, during my absence?" said I, looking with unfeigned disgust at all this new-fangled finery.

"Visitors?" reiterated my mother, not understanding that I chose to consider it impossible these demonstrations should have been made solely in my favour.

"Or you are perhaps expecting some," I continued, "to gratify whose taste you have put my poor comfortable old den so thoroughly to the blush!—In that case, you should have apprized me, mother; for my coming here even for the few days I shall be able to stay, will probably prove inconvenient!"

"Only a few days?" cried my mother, too much aghast to explain that the gauds around me were dedicated to my exclusive use. "I thought the vacation lasted till October?"

"And surely you told us," added Dora, "that you had no intention of taking up your abode at Wrottesley till you attained your majority?"

"Not the slightest. But I have visits to pay in Yorkshire that will occupy a portion of my time. I shall travel during the remainder."

"But, my dear Wrottesley," cried Dora — (for since my accession of fortune, 'Harry' was dropped in the family) — "we have been making all sorts of engagements for you!" —

"Fishing parties to Luton and Brocket, — which it will be *such* a disappointment to our friends if you do not join!"—added Dora.

"I have been accustomed to see them resign themselves with great patience to the want of my company on such occasions," said I, with a significant smile.

"With those to whom we allude, you are not even acquainted," rejoined my elder sister. — "The Stormonts have proved a great addition to our neighbourhood."

"If you allude to the people who live at a fine old Grange near Berkhampstead,—the family having resided in the county for the last three centuries, and the present Sir Thomas Stormont ever since he was born, — I scarcely know how you can call them an addition to the neighbourhood."

"I should have said, perhaps, to our acquaintance. We have seen a great deal of them lately."

"*And do you mean,* mother," cried I, turning with indigna-

tion to the head of the family, "that you have stooped to receive attentions from those who have been insulting you by their neglect for the last dozen years; and who now condescend to notice you only because your son has become a man of fortune, and they have a batch of ugly daughters to dispose of?"

"Lady Stormont has never been on terms with the Whichcotes," observed Emily, stepping in with an olive-branch; "and our intimacy at Barming rendered it impossible for her to seek our acquaintance."

"But the moment the Whichcotes saw fit to resent Dora's dismissal of George," added Emily, "the Stormonts took the first opportunity to ask an introduction."

"Mr. Stormont has repeatedly told us," rejoined her sister, "that the Whichcotes had been the only obstacle."

"There is a *Mr.* Stormont in the case, is there?" said I, — for though a feud with the Whichcote tribe was a tolerably certain passport to my good will, these sudden advances were suspicious.

"Yes: a nephew of Sir Thomas's, — a very charming young man, who is to succeed to his title" —

"And, as in duty of kinsmanship bound, marry one of the daughters, I suppose," said I.

"Oh dear, no! — A marriage between cousins is such a fatal bar to all family connection!" cried my elder sister. "But I assure you, Wrottesley, you will find Reginald Stormont a most superior young man; and it will disappoint us all sadly if you start for Yorkshire before the acquaintance is made."

"The truth is, my dear boy," observed my mother, the first time we were alone together, "young Stormont is making up to Dora. On his return from his travels, he came down to stay at his uncle's; and having accidentally met your sister, made such representations to the family, that it was *he* who brought about the acquaintance."

"I suspect," was still my ungracious rejoinder, "that it would have been long enough in bringing about, but for the existence of such a spot of earth as Wrottesley Hall."

"Perhaps so!" gravely replied my mother. — "I dare say

our connection with so distinguished a member of the landed gentry of England as the late Mr. Wrottesley, is not without its influence on the Stormonts. For you seem to overlook the fact, my dear boy, that your sisters are as nearly allied to him as yourself." —

"*He* seems to have overlooked it, — which is far more to the purpose!" said I, with a laugh which, I fear, was a little triumphant. For my mother instantly endeavoured to lower my tone.

"Hush, Harry! — Hush, my dear Wrottesley!" cried she. — "There is really no occasion for letting the whole household, and through them the whole county, into our family secrets. As there was every reason that the old gentleman *should* have made some addition to the slender fortunes of your sisters, let them at least enjoy the benefit of the doubt which the world seems to entertain on the subject."

I understood all now; — the fishing parties, and pic-nics, and tardy attentions of the Stormonts! — But though fully intending to make a liberal provision for my mother and sisters as soon as the attainment of my majority rendered me the unshackled master of my property, I was neither Christian nor philosopher enough to forego meanwhile my petty vengeance.

"I did not choose," I informed my lady-mother, "to connive in what so nearly resembled imposition." — And lo! on the eve of a grand dinner-party — offered by the Grange to Hentsfield, for the sole purpose of a general introduction, — I found it convenient to start for Yorkshire.

The first time I was conscious of feeling my mind expand beyond the paltry narrowness into which it had been contracted by a mean education and want of sympathy in my family, was in that northward journey. — For the first time, I contemplated the thriving, cheering aspect of our well-cultivated kingdom, with the pride and glory of a proprietor of the soil.

In winter-time, — Wilsbury be my witness, — the rural is an unsavoury thing. Leafless woods and miry ways are associated with the notion of want, disease, and wretchedness; the scanty *meal — the shuddering* ague; — and not a thatched roof but

brings with it associations of soup-tickets and gratuitous sacks of coals. But at the season when the earth is pleased to open her veins of milk and honey, and the fruit-crowned face of plenty peeps like that of a hamadryad from every green thicket, — when even the "long dun wolds," instead of being "ribbed with snow," are attired in robes of verdant velvet, pranked with purple and gold by the blossoming of gorse and heather, — the cheerful thrifty villages afford a pleasant interlude between the stateliness of our sweeping parks and shrubbiness of our cozy villas. The sturdy air of the peasantry — the busy centralization of the manufacturing towns—the compactness and subordination of every homestead, from the stirring farm to the lordly hall with its wings and plantations, — combined to inspire me with a certain glow of heart, which those who delight in high-sounding words are apt to call patriotism.

By the time I caught sight of the imposing façade of Wrottesley Hall, developed amid the noble verdure of the fine old woods, I had not only adopted Andrew Grove's opinion, that my stake in the country was well worth the sacrifice of a couple of years of my bootless leisure to set my mind in order for the task of legislation; but had literally forgotten that I was making my *debut* in the most perfect new britska that ever followed the rattling pace of four north-road posters, ere posting became a thing of tradition.

The aspect of my property was scarcely less improved than my equipage. As yet unaware what price my friend Gripham might place upon his labours, I wasted a world of eulogistic interjections on his zeal. It was amazing what had been done for the place. Though the repairs purported to be no more than the needful, the mere restoration of light and air to the much-abused premises, by the unblocking of windows and opening of doors, — the mere assigning of things to their proper places, and removing all that was irrelevant and unsightly, — imparted an air of dignity, airiness, and prosperity to the grand old mansion, which was rejoicing to look on.

The beauty of the season, the richness of the shrubberies, which *would* expand and blossom in spite of the deficiency of

gardeners, — and, above all, the buoyancy of the summer air, which, laden with a thousand fragrances, breathed so wooingly through the open windows, — excluded the sense of loneliness so apt to beset an uninhabited house. Winter demands the stir of a sufficient establishment; — fires on scores of hearths, and blazing lights in every corridor. — But short nights and the sunshine of lengthened days reconcile one to solitude; and old Nicholls, whom, with Sir Robert's sanction, I had long since installed as major-domo, had taken care that the wing selected for my use should be in such order, that my college chambers, with all their lounging chairs, gun-racks, whip-stands, cigar-cellarets, and horde of noisy guests, were far less cheerful and cheering.

On the morrow, I was up at day-break, for the first time since the auspicious dawn which found me philosophizing over my meagre prospects at Hentsfield; and now, when I threw open the windows, and felt that the incense which rose into my chamber was emitted by my own garden-grounds, and that through the rich expanse of hill and dale on which I was gazing,

I was lord of the fowl and the brute, —

that one of my keepers was unmooring the boat in the boat-house, in case I fulfilled my project of fishing, and another preparing for my expedition to a warren a couple of miles off, but still my "own own," while a third awaited my arrival at the pheasantry for the examination of his stock, — my emotions strongly resembled those of Christopher Sly! —

Upon my soul, I am a lord indeed!

were words which, if they did not actually escape my lips, contained the very moral of my feelings.

"I could be content to spend a week or two here in perfect retirement," was my next reflection. "The worst of it is, these Yorkshire squires, with their proverbial hospitality, will be for wrenching me out of house and home to enjoy every body's cheer but my own. Dr. Temple will be at me before the day is over; and Roxborough Elms offer itself as my wash-pot. But *what I most dread is the* strife of county politics! — Till my prin-

ciples are known, (which there can be no immediate necessity for declaring,) Lord Meadowley will be wooing me for the liberal party; while the Tory tribe will throw open in my favour the rusty old gates of Courtfield Manor; — and how one loathes the thoughts of a hecatomb in July — turtle, venison, toasts, and sentiments! Even a greater bore, however, might be endured for the satisfaction of gazing on such a landscape as this, and knowing oneself to be monarch of all one surveys!"

A glimpse at London on my way (*par ricochet*) from Cambridge to Hentsfield — London in the dog-days — dusty, sultry, noisy, and fetid, — London, viewed from the vulgar publicity of a flash hotel, where a renewal of the ginpunch and chicken hazard of college life avouched a total want of connection with the more refined pleasures of the *beau monde*, — had put me wonderfully in conceit with the beauties of nature. Destitute of the thousand golden ties which render the capital delightful, unable to fall, like Lord John Jocelyn, at once into a specific niche in the polished temple of society such as confers an interest on public life and a charm on private, my soul sickened at the brick-faced Babylon, in whose interminable suburbs trees are daily cut down in order that houses may be planted.

As yet, my senses were undeluded by the hatchi-like intoxication which serves to conceal so much that is loathsome — so much that is disgraceful — so much that is heart-rending, beneath the gay drapery of the spangled mantle of Fashion:

Das Gemiſch von Koth und Feuer,

as it is called by Goethe, — that bold taker in vain of the name of any false God!

But though charmed for a moment by the beauty of Wrottesley, my heart was not yet ripe for deeply-felt enjoyment of its solitudes. — The seed which had fallen on a rock, sprang up, but soon withered. Before two days were at an end, the pleasure of seeing gave place to the desire of being seen. It seemed impossible but that so grand an event as my arrival in my britska and four, must be known in the neighbourhood. On the former occasion, it had transpired, as by electric telegraph; and I was too vain to take into the account that, at that moment, Wrottes-

ley Hall was a point of general interest from containing the ashes of its deceased Phœnix as well as his embryo successor.

On the third day, I began to find old Nicholls, who followed me about the house, prattling with the affectionate doting of old Adam, the attendant of Orlando de Boys, all but insupportable. Fishing, with no one but the keepers to admire the skill of my angle, or weight of my trout, was a sorry recreation; and while producing a marvellous mortality among the rabbits, the vertical summer sun was nearly the death of myself. Even the satisfaction of a cigar puffed into the face of nature under my own portico, seemed to require companionship to give it zest; and I was falling rapidly the victim of a galloping fit of the spleen, when lo! the sight of Gripham's odious buggy driving up the grand approach with an air of proprietorship, arguing that there were two Kings in Brentford, roused me from my weariness of spirit.

The recollection of the malicious report spread at Cambridge by Whichcote concerning the disputed will, applied a spur to my side; and I assumed an air as dignified as was compatible with a shooting-jacket and straw hat, to make the attorney sensible that my announcement of being glad to see him was a phrase as purely conventional as that which apprizes a condemned criminal that it is "His Majesty's pleasure" he shall be hanged.

But no effort was necessary to keep him at becoming distance. His manner was even more studiedly cold than I would desire; for there lurked within his cunning eye indications of repressed merriment, as though he were making game of me at heart.

He did not even relax into an open smile when I complimented him, and sincerely, on the altered aspect of the place.

"There has been no great difficulty," he stiffly replied, "in replacing things in their original state:—I mean, Sir, in the state they were before the mind of my late client became so unfortunately disordered."

This sounded horribly like confirmation of Whichcote's report! — But how was I to summon courage to ascertain by a direct question whether it purported a threat. With rising colour *and quickened* respiration, I took a fresh weed from my cigar-

ciples are known, (which there can be no immediate necessity for declaring,) Lord Meadowley will be wooing me for the liberal party; while the Tory tribe will throw open in my favour the rusty old gates of Courtfield Manor; — and how one loathes the thoughts of a hecatomb in July — turtle, venison, toasts, and sentiments! Even a greater bore, however, might be endured for the satisfaction of gazing on such a landscape as this, and knowing oneself to be monarch of all one surveys!"

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It was the cause, it was the cause, my soul!

If my presentiments told truth, mischief was brewing against me within the deed-chests of attorneys and equally iron knowledge-boxes of counsel learned in the law. My busy fancy presented old Wrottesley's will before my eyes, grown so diaphanous and tindery that not a clause would hold together. And I, who, amid my college discomfitures, had sometimes been ass enough to fancy that much coin had brought much care, and that I might perhaps have been a happier man if left to scramble through life as my father had done before me, exposed to the ignominious patronage of Whichcotes of Barming, and brother-in-lawship with a captain of lancers, had my eyes opened at once to the enjoyments included in the pride, pomp, and circumstance of my position, while gazing upon my glorious avenues, with the apprehension that a time was coming when they might be mine no longer.

I suppose it was this vague terror uppermost in my mind which took me sauntering, day after day, on my shooting pony, across every farm and through every woodland on the estate. — There was one particular road along the shrubby riverside, which I had made up my mind to avoid as bordering on the property of Sir Gratian. But a certain degree of curiosity to see how the cliffs which rose almost perpendicularly from the eastward side of the stream, and which in winter might have been mistaken for the ramparts of a fortress, were looking, now that summer had called into exuberance the shrubs enrooted in their fissures and suspended from every cleft some flowery pennant,—directed my steps, or rather, the amble of my pony, almost involuntarily towards the spot.

And what a spot!—How gracious to the eye—how emollient to the temper! Why do we pore over pages of poetry, in tongues living or dead, to acquire a jargon about vernal bowers or crystal streams, when such volumes lie open around us, supplying the animated type from whence those pale and languid copies of nature are derived!—What poet of Greece or Italy ever vivified his landscapes by the power of genius, like the faint ripple of the living *waters, — the skimming* of the swallow over their surface, — or

the cry of the bittern winging its sullen way to the distant marsh? —

Above all, why post like mad to Vaucluse or Vallombrosa, or peregrinate the Pyrennean or Alpine wilds, while such delicious scenery as my own Wheledale lie scattered among our native hills! — I am ready to swear that had that quiet valley, with its gushing stream, bordered here and there by groups of solitary ash or elm-trees stationed at intervals like gigantic sentinels to guard the defile, — the towering rocks excluding or admitting, according to the windings of the stream, the slanting evening sunshine, which, every now and then, some indenture or angle permitted to peep down into the valley and gild up patches of fern and furze as if in derision of the soberer verdure of the rest; — had it been pourtrayed, I say, by Wouverman, Rubens or Karl du Jardin, with an iron-gray horse or two in the foreground, backed by lumpish cavaliers, much resembling my uncle Toby, and called a hawking party, the mere picture of its beauties would be bought up at a hundred pounds an inch by some *dilettante* Marquis, or Bristol M. P., to be exhibited among the ancient masters at the British Institution, and make the mouth of the National Gallery water.

It was not a hawking party, however, that I descried on the golden evening in July, when I found my pony straying beside the stream, as though the murmur of the waters among the pebbles "made music to its lonely ear," after a morning when the thermometer stood at 88° in the shade. As far as the distance enabled me to discern, the group which had taken possession of a solitude, the exclusive property of Henry Wrottesley Powers-court Wrottesley, Esq., consisted of two fair equestrians and a most unfair pedestrian: for though he sauntered between them, (when even the intrusion of the elm and ash-trees into the midst of a road, which consisted of one pennyworth of shingle to a monstruous quantity of turf, enabled them to proceed three abreast,) his attentions were wholly directed "over the left." Whomsoever might be the right hand lady, she was shamefully set at nought! —

It was, perhaps, my perception of this, and the conviction

that every riding party containing two ladies ought to be a *partie carrée*, which decided me to prick on. But I had not proceeded many paces, at a rate doubling my wonted speed, before I descried that the fair Amazons were no other than Adela and Caroline; ay, — Adela and Caroline Roxborough caught trespassing on my grounds!—

What business had they there at such a time?

Had they been alone, I suppose I should have — not put spurs to my shooting pony, for I was riding in shooting shoes; — but made the best of my way to join them. But the third individual was a puzzler. — It was not Sir Gratian. Oh no, decidedly, it was not Sir Gratian; who would have distributed his paternal attentions with greater integrity. The fellow's step, moreover, was too elastic for the gouty toe of the old Baronet. He walked as though he trod on fleecy clouds, and lived on ether. He walked, (God save the mark!) as though, being the companion of angels, he were the happiest of men! —

I was exceedingly indignant; first, because those who chose to give no sign of their cognizance of my existence, were making themselves thus strangely at home on the soil of which I was lord; and secondly, that any thing wearing broad-cloth should presume to whisper so closely into the ear of Caroline Roxborough. I did not, however, advance and bring them to the shame they so richly deserved; but skulked stealthily at a distance, taking sights at them as cunningly as a Kentuckian, having his rifle on his shoulder and deadly enmity at heart.

But what was my surprise and disgust when, a sudden turn of the road, bringing me in ambush behind the bole of a vast oak tree and the party before me into profile, apprized me that the happy man, the key-note of the trio, was no other than — Henry Temple!

Then rushed into my mind all I had heard at Cambridge of the young tutor's marriage engagements and prospects of preferment; and, pellucid as was the stream on whose margin I was "mooning" and pleasant its murmur, I would fain have had it deep, strong, and turbid, that I might have flung into its *waters the presumptuous* mortal who, it instantly occurred to me,

must be the affianced lover of Caroline. Nay, I am not sure that I did not wish the traitress herself engulphed with her black-coated Amadis.

But I was now less than ever inclined to place myself within ken of the party; and as they were approaching the spot where the beautiful stream issued from the base of the cliffs as by a subterranean tunnel, on the borders of Sir Gratian's property so that ten minutes more would carry them off my grounds, I was not sorry to find a shrubby nook within an angle of the cliffs, where I could lie *perdu* till they were out of sight.

Another moment, and the movements of the trio convinced me that their meeting was a clandestine one, and that the young ladies had not been escorted by their sable knight from their father's house. For on approaching the confines of the valley, they reined up, for the manifest purpose of leave-taking. And a tolerably tender leave-taking it was! — Though the happy couple had no reason to suppose themselves overlooked by anything but the jackdaws winging the noisy circles of their evening flight near the shrubby summit of the cliffs, they really might have been less demonstrative; and so overcome was I by the startle of finding myself the unsuspected witness of such a scene, that Henry Temple had seen the last of his love, and nearly reached the spot where my pony was munching the young osier shoots, before I became conscious of the awkwardness of my position.

Lest he should fancy me absorbed by emotions of a tender nature, I resolved to address him cavalierly as he passed; and either banter him on what I had witnessed, or pretend to have seen nothing, according to the mood in which I found him. But when he came within hail of me, instead of evincing either surprise or embarrassment, he simply lifted his hat with an air of chilling defiance, that plainly indicated — "Speak to me if you dare!" —

I did *not* dare. I felt too thoroughly ashamed of being caught in a seeming act of espial, to find courage for accosting a man nearly ten years my senior in age, and twenty in endowments and self-possession. But by the road taken by Henry Temple on

emerging from the valley, through the windings of which I had much ado to keep my pony at so respectful a distance as to avoid the appearance of forcing my company upon him, I saw that he was staying at the Rectory.

This might account for the Rector's incivility — just as the Cambridge tutor's intimacy with Roxborough Elms might account for the holding back of Sir Gratian. For with all my self-complacency, there was no concealing the fact that, short as was my college career, it had done me little credit. I had lived among knaves, and conducted myself like a fool.

But it was not till I came within view of the vast frontage of Wrottesley Hall, which looked to me at that moment as lonely as an enchanted castle in a fairy tale, that I became fully aware of the pangs I was enduring, or of the motives which had brought me in such a hurry back to Yorkshire! —

I had never said to myself in plain English and the honesty of my heart, "Caroline Roxborough, with her graceful serenity and meekness, is the very companion in life for a selfish, consequential braggart like yourself. Your inexperience may have led your boyhood into the mistake of over-estimating the rustic family of a friend whom education had accomplished; or the force of example induced you, at Cambridge, to dive into the mud of vicious enjoyment, and imagine you could fish up Orient pearl. But the Caroline thrown by Providence in your worthless way, would, if perseveringly wooed and won, secure the happiness of your life." But now, I saw that such had been my secret conviction; — that it was the prospect of re-admission to the Elms which had caused me to turn with indifference from the pastimes of London, and break with so little ceremony the not unpromising engagements of Hentsfield. And in the exasperation of my disappointment, I fancied myself as completely jilted as if Caroline had seriously encouraged my homage, and Henry Temple been the newer acquaintance! —

But now that the spirit, good or evil, was roused within me, I no longer hesitated about the line of conduct to be adopted towards the Elms. Sir Gratian had given me a warm general invi*tation to his house,* and might take the consequences. I had

been prevented making the initiative visit only by the dread of a cold reception. As matters stood, what signified whether the family were displeased or not?

On the morrow, therefore I rode over; resolved to apprize the adventuresome damsels who made so free with my domain, (if indeed Henry Temple had not frustrated the information,) that I was thoroughly in their secret.

"Sir Gratian has been in town for the last fortnight, Sir, and in his absence the young ladies do not receive company," was the formal answer of the jolly old butler, who seemed vexed to be obliged to send me from the door.

Not receive company, forsooth, during their father's absence! — So, so, so! — Such then was probably the origin of their unmaidenly rendezvous on the enemy's ground! —

"But my master is expected back this after-noon, or to-morrow morning, Sir," added the hospitable Corkscrew, to whom I had made no audible answer. And I was about to give him my card to be transmitted to the old gentleman on his return, when lo! a sound of wheels on the gravel, accompanied by the ill-measured stepping of post-horses; and before I had time to get out of the way, the exclamation of the red-nosed functionary of the ale-cellar apprized me that "master" was beforehand with his calculations — that Sir Gratian was come.

It was not any sort of misgiving as to the reception likely to be afforded me which at that moment brought so vivid a colour to my cheek. I was blushing for the lumbering build of my Liquorpond Street britska, as revealed by force of contrast with the light, easy, well-hung, well-finished barouche in which the quizzical old Yorkshire Baronet made his appearance. Within it, by his side, sat an individual as neat as the carriage; whom I should naturally have concluded to be his son Charley, but that, connecting the turf pursuits of that well-known sportsman with his Roxborough origin, my mind's eye had always figured him to itself in a Newmarket cutaway and knowing tile, with cords, and tops, — the type of flash sportsmanship and slang. Whereas the stranger who held back while Sir Gratian

hallooed across him to bid me a hearty welcome, was calm gentlemanly, and grave of habit as a court physician.

"By Jove! this is being in luck, my dear Wrottesley!" cried Sir Gratian. "Five minutes later, and we might have missed you. — I hadn't an item of a notion you would be in the country before Sir Robert returned from Buxton. — But so much the better, my lad, — so much the better! — Here 's my son on tenter-hooks to make your acquaintance. Charley, my dear boy, Mr. Wrottesley Powerscourt!"

Instead of evincing any symptoms of tenter-hooks, when the post-boy rose in his stirrups to denote that he was at his journey's end, Mr. Roxborough formally raised his hat. But his ceremonious deportment was only in harmony with his plain dress and cold though handsome countenance; nor did I for a moment fancy my new acquaintance uncivil. I only wondered what could have given so mere a piece of mechanism a sporting turn, or Sir Gratian a son so courtly.

"I shall do myself the honour of waiting upon you and Mr. Roxborough to-morrow, Sir Gratian," said I, turning my horse 's head to be off, with the painful certainty that the Newmarket man's eye was fixed upon my horse with an air of compassion towards so ostensible a proof of my greenness. And at that moment, though the brute had cost me a hundred and fifty guineas only two months before, I heartily wished that it were feeding the crows of Wheledale.

Away I went, turning a deaf ear to Sir Gratian's entreaties that I would not make a stranger of his son, with whom he hoped to see me the best of friends, but stay and dine with them at once; and a deliberation, graver than the deepest of my academic studies ever produced, did it cost me to determine, when the morrow came, in what guise to produce the most stunning impression on this fashionable automaton. Resolved to convince him that I was quite as well up to the time of day as himself, I made my appearance attired according to the exaggerated cut of vulgar dandyism prevalent at the universities; and probably astonished him twice as much as I intended.

Had Sir Gratian Roxborough been capable of a sustained ef-

fort even in a practical joke I should certainly have fancied myself hoaxed; and that some milksop lord, perhaps some humble scholar or poor relative of the family, was imposed upon me as the fashionable Charles. So mild were his manners and so deferential his deportment towards his sisters, that I, who since I came to man's and the Wrottesley estate, had begun to treat mine as my father may have done his subalterns, or Abdel Kader his Moors, could scarcely believe in his identity with the owner of the famous "Titan," "Marmaduke," and "Miss Jenny!" —

For it was not solely on Sir Gratian's own showing, or Dr. Temple's detractions, I had formed my opinion of young Roxborough. "Bell's Life in London," and the "Sporting Magazine," yielded confirmation strong as proofs of unholy writ, that though his whiskers were still limp and his brow as white as ivory, he had lost the Oaks with Marmaduke, and won the Paris steeple-chase with Miss Jenny; to say nothing of being crack rider with the Pytchley and Atherstone during successive winters; while the "Morning Post" announced his dining one day at Berwick House in the same party with Highnesses, Royal and Serene; and the next at Greenwich, with the opera-dancers most in repute and disrepute. Whichcote, too, was constantly quoting him as "my friend Charley Roxborough"; — an epithet Whichcote was seldom heard to apply except to some very great man of whom he knew nothing.

But what more stupid than to imagine that, in these our times, a man may be foreseen and forethought by means of his calling, like a porter by his ticket, a cabman by his badge, or a hero by his order of the Bath! — Before I had been ten minutes in the well-remembered old drawing-room at the Elms, tremblingly conscious of my proximity to Car'and Adela whom I had not courage to look in the face, I heard Mr. Roxborough whisper to his sister — "You need not wait dinner for the Archdeacon, my dear Caroline; — the haunch will be spoiled, for the Archdeacon is always late;" — and could not help wishing that, since the son I anticipated as a roaring blade had turned out the most ninimi pinimi of ladies' men, some other than a

canonical guest had been invited to meet me. — Such a party could not but be a failure.

At all events, we were spared a long grace from the dignitary of the church; who, so long as the soup was on the table, left us in admiration of his empty chair. Anticipating the noiseless entrance and muffled approach which, from the era of monkhood's trailing sandal has been characteristic of the clerical gait, I kept constantly snatching glances towards the door, in the expectation of seeing a tall, dark shadow glide into the room. — The reader will consequently appreciate my amazement when, just as the silver cover was lifted from a Humber salmon exhibiting a sort of leaden-lustred hue like an ingot of Potosi silver, — a burly step was heard approaching; drowned as it entered the room by the stentorian volume of a voice that cried, as if doing justice to a view halloo:

"Beg pardon, young ladies — beg pardon, my dear Sir Gratian! — My portmanteau and I have been tumbling each other upside down for the last half hour, to find a cravat not too starched for this confounded Terra del Fuego weather!"

The eager manner in which the dignitary instantly proceeded to officiate in helping the fish, and the care with which when it came to his turn he sprinkled cayenne pepper over his lobster sauce, convinced me that he had purposely eschewed the ox-tail soup of a Yorkshire house-keeper — (a thing of a consistency to serve for veneering mahogany!) — and made his appearance *à point* so as to secure the distribution of the fish. For, after bowing slightly to me in return for the clumsy introduction intruded upon us at that inopportune moment by our host, he observed, "the French prefer caper-sauce with salmon; but, within safe distance of the sea, nothing like a fresh lobster!" — as though we had spent previous years together, discussing the mysteries of the stove and saucepan.

"Madeira!" cried he, when the butler offered him sherry or Sauterne, in a tone such as, in former centuries, might have fulminated excommunication. And a few minutes afterwards, having seized the occasion of his performing the old-fashioned *ceremony of squeezing* a lemon into the interstice of a forequarter

of lamb, to examine the jolly *bon-vivant*, I could not help thinking that the nose which put even his red-cushioned cheeks to shame, — his yellow-white waistcoat with little sugar-loaf buttons, and yellow-white stock, that looked like a Chinese implement of torture, — had much more of the butler out of place, or yellow admiral on the retired list, than of the beneficed divine.

A favourite of the family, either as a relation (for he was Archdeacon Roxborough) or from the untirable vigour of his animal spirits, I saw that the louder he talked, the more *sotto voce* became the remarks of Charles Roxborough; who seemed to think that, with a father and kinsman to bellow to each other like oxen from adjacent pastures, he might indulge in a double ration of the luxury of inanity. When answering the Archdeacon's invitation to take wine with him, the most mincing bride that ever pronounced the fatal "yes" in St. George's Church, could not have better emulated the plaintive murmur of the "sucking dove."

When I came to be better acquainted with the Archdeacon, (a scatterling of the Carlton House bacchanalians,) and had heard him troll his catches and vociferate certain madrigals in which the flowing bowl and rosy wine were freshly remembered, I could not help feeling that the Prince Regent might just as well have provided for Captain Morris or Theodore Hook by a silk apron, as for so powerfully-lunged a devotee of the things of this world. But if a bad dignitary of the Church, he was not a bad man. The fact was that, in *his* youth, excesses of the table were so thoroughly the order of the day, inculcated from sire to son by paternal example, from heaven-born ministers down to ensigns of militia, that even the pulpit was no security against the contagion.

The Archdeacon, it appeared, had only arrived in time to dress; and from the resignation with which the heir of the house submitted to the coarse bantering of his unvenerable "very venerable" relative, touching certain losses at Ascot and having been forced to part with his yacht instead of joining the squadron at Cowes, I saw that he was a person who must have influence in the world of some kind or other; for Charles Roxborough be-

longed to a school not over sensitive to the claims of either cloth or kin.

As soon as the girls, (whom their brother's presence, in spite of his apparent deference towards them, seemed to reduce to cyphers,) had quitted the room, the Archdeacon's allusions became indeed so personal, that Sir Gratian saw fit to check them. For they were not so completely *en famille* as to justify the *lessive* of their *linge sale*.

"As I live by bread and butter, Charles, my boy," said the jolly old gentleman, whom his kinsman's excellent claret was warming into indiscretion, "I scarce knew what to make of it when I heard of you in Yorkshire six weeks before Doncaster, and with the regattas bearing in sight!"—

"Surely you must have been equally surprized, my dear Archdeacon," mildly rejoined Charles Roxborough, "to hear of my father in London at the height of the season?"

"The height of the season, then, is in the dog-days, as time flies, eh?" cried his burly neighbour with a chuckling laugh. "In *my* time, it was not the fashion to eat dust with your strawberries. Catalani left off singing, as the nightingales, do, in June; and Parliament was up as soon as the hay was down.—Ha, ha, ha!—But I was *not* at all surprized, Charles, to hear of your father's visit to his lawyer, (for you won't deny, I suspect, that he saw more of Lincoln's Inn than of Grosvenor Square during his stay?) We were all expecting that Miss Jenny's breakdown would bring down a few more acres of oaks—eh, Sir Gratian! *The* Oaks, it seems, rendered it necessary to eradicate them root and branch!"

"I certainly made a bad Epsom of it!" said his victim, quietly passing him the claret. "But I have a famous book for Doncaster."

"I had rather hear of a famous book with Coutts!" rejoined the Archdeacon, luxuriously imbibing the *fumet* of his Château-Margaux. "There would be less fear, my dear Charles, of a renewal of my annual skirmishes with you, as trustee for your sisters' fortunes."

"*I promise you*, my dear Archdeacon, that, had you granted

the little concession I wrote to ask previous to my father's visit to town, the money would have been replaced with interest by Christmas, and the Marlingford farms have remained in the family."

"Couldn't risk it, my dear boy,—couldn't possibly venture to risk it!—On one point, Charles, there is a family resemblance betwixt us. Like yourself, a trustee has no discretion—ha, ha, ha! Besides, 't is n't fair to make the girls pay for your whistle. Let the governor down with his dust and welcome. If you ruin yourself and him on the turf, 't is his own fault for bringing you up in the stable."

"You shall exhort me as long and severely as you please to-morrow morning, my dear Archdeacon," rejoined Charles Roxborough. "But by expatiating so much at length on our family failings, you will reduce Mr. Wrottesley into the same condition into which you have preached my father!" a gentle snore from whom avouched, at that moment, his son's assertion that he was asleep.

"Why, certainly, Sir Gratian don't appear to have been particularly wide awake lately!" retorted the Churchman, in a voice that might have wakened the Seven Sleepers. "As to Mr. Wrottesley, I entertained too much regard for old Wrottesley (and his cellar,) not to be desirous of extending my admonitions to his representative."

An awkward bow and foolish laugh were all the acknowledgment I could venture.

"Wrottesley Hall used to produce the fattest venison and grow the finest asparagus in Yorkshire," said the Archdeacon gravely; "and there must be still some Hock in the cellars, which Colonel Wrottesley of the Coldstream sent home from Bremen, where it had been lying half a century."

"It will give me great pleasure to hear you admit, Mr. Archdeacon, that it has lost none of its flavour by coming into my possession," said I. In requital for which remote hint of hospitality, the jovial dignitary begged to direct my serious attention to the future Sir Charles Roxborough of Roxborough Elms.

"In him, you see what passes for the best dressed man in

London," said he, with a spasmodic laugh. "Charley's coat gives the law to coats; and his hat has a right to look all other hats out of countenance. But bear in mind, my dear young gentleman, that most of those who have exercised this species of autocracy in the world of fashion, end with having no coat to their back, or wherewithal to hang up their hat!" Then, suddenly dropping the nasal twang with which his pretended homily had been delivered, he challenged Charles Roxborough, who had not moved a muscle of his handsome face while under the lash, to a glass of claret; and, till we quitted the dining-room, continued to talk to me of old times at Wrottesley Hall.

"My poor friend Wrottesley never was the same man after that sober-sided fellow, Temple, got the living and filled him with qualms that ruined his digestion," said the Archdeacon gravely.

"In old Hurd's days, by my father's account, this must have been a much pleasanter neighbourhood," rejoined Mr. Roxborough, filling his glass.

"Ay, for those who don't care for women's society," retorted the Archdeacon. "Your father and Sir Robert Hawley being widowers, could afford to enjoy the bachelor parties given by Wrottesley. But Temple blew the whole thing to pieces. In Mrs. Haldane's time, he never set foot in the Hall; though, by his well-calculated conduct at her death, he managed to get thoroughly round my old friend. I suspect he was a little disappointed that neither his own name nor his brother's appeared in the will."

"Had Henry Temple's jesuitical face any share, then, in Mrs. Haldane's conversion?" inquired Mr. Roxborough.

"No! he was but a boy when she died. But they say she recommended his brother (on whom he was already hanging on,) to bring him up for the Church; and persuaded old Wrottesley to promise him the next presentation to Rainham."

"I don't believe a word of it!" cried Sir Gratian, suddenly waking up at the sound of a familiar name. "I 've always said, *and will stand* to 't, that if Wrottesley had meant any thing of the *kind, he 'd have given* it in writing. Dr. Temple may choose to

make his expectations on the subject an excuse for having winked at his brother's impudent pretensions to the hand of my daughter. But neither Gripham nor Klose had ever the least inkling of the matter; and nothing will ever persuade me that had any promise been made to a shrewd man like Temple, he would not have secured it in black and white."

"Strange to say, this is the first I have heard on the subject," said I, suddenly acquiring an inch or two in stature, on finding any item of my property called in question.

"And for your sake, may it be the last!" said Mr. Roxborough gravely. "In this neighbourhood, so barren in topics of conversation, they have seldom any thing better to discuss than the disposal of some wretched curacy."

"Rainham is not a curacy. Rainham is a living of a thousand a year," said I, interrupting him, and not caring to hear my belongings disparaged.

"It might be the Archbishopric of York; and so long as Mr. Temple had no claim to it, I do not see that it entitles him to marry my sister," replied Roxborough, junior, with perfect self-possession.

"Neither does he, I should imagine," said I; "for he is said, at Cambridge, to have engaged himself to finish the education of a fellow-commoner whose father has capital patronage in the Church."

"He may finish the education of the Rajah of Tanjore for any thing I care! — But I have already expressed my objections to such a brother-in-law in terms which must prevent any man, with the spirit of a mouse, from persevering in his pretensions," replied Roxborough haughtily; "and my father has forbidden him the house."

A piece of intelligence which, when we adjourned to the drawing-room shortly afterwards for coffee, enabled me to look Car and Adela defyingly in the face, when they affected to treat me with frigid civility. The latter, indeed, with even less. On my joining her at the open window, to which she had retreated to gaze out upon the lawn, which now exhibited its heavy dews to the lustre of a beautiful moonlight, she drew back with such un-

concealed symptoms of disgust, that, as we were out of hearing of the rest of the party, I could not forbear observing, that "I had been in hopes the Battle of Prague was to be the last battle fought between us."

Even this allusion to our brief intimacy of the preceding winter failed to relax her countenance into a smile. At length, the scornful curl of her lip provoked me into adding, "I was anxious, Miss Roxborough, to say as much or more the other evening, when you did me the honour of an excursion into Wheledale. But you were so well attended, that I could not venture to accost you."

She was civil enough after that! Her features became blanched at the mere allusion; and from that moment till I sat down to whist with the three Roxboroughs, (for the pleasure of losing six rubbers and receiving four hours of objurgation from the Archdeacon,) she contrived to hold me in desultory conversation beside the window, lest I should renew my hints in presence of her father and brother.

CHAPTER XI.

I 'm serious — so are all men upon paper,
And why should I not form my speculation,
And hold up to the sun my little taper?
Mankind, just now, seem wrapt in meditation
On constitutions and steam-boats of vapour. BYRON.

THE polite philosophy of Chesterfield has been sadly brought into disrepute, during the last half-hundred years, by the coarse sarcasm of an able man. But in spite of Dr. Johnson and all his dogmas, good manners, as the outward and visible sign of good nature, are not to be scouted. — And now that fashion has introduced into the finest drawing-rooms the dialect and pursuits of hackney coachmen, such courteous mildness of deportment as that of Charles Roxborough, however meretricious or superficial, acquires some charm by force of contrast.

Instead of indulging in the Archdeacon's favourite pastime of "getting a rise out of a man," *he* carefully abstained at all times *from unwelcome* topics or piquant allusions. His handsome face

and easy flow of conversation were charmingly in unison. — Winner or loser his countenance preserved its calmness, and his voice its equanimity; so that, at the end of a year's acquaintance, I felt that I would give much — if only by way of variety — to see him ruffled. —

At the period of his visit to the Elms, I was rendered peculiarly sensitive to the attraction of his good breeding, by the thwartings to which I had been previously subjected. — My home probation, — my college mortifications, — my Wrottesley isolation, disposed me fully to appreciate the civilities of one who made my hours and predilections his own; — who proposed to introduce me to all his father's neighbours, — all his own friends: and by the time we had attacked my rabbits together sufficiently often to satisfy him that I was an execrable shot, actually invited me to accompany him to the Highlands, where he rented a celebrated moor in common with the young Earl of Fortrose. —

During the week to intervene previous to his departure for the north, we were always together, — for boating, shooting, billiards, whist — sometimes at *my* house, — sometimes at his father's; — but without so much as a difference of opinion arising between us. After the frank reproofs of poor Andrew Grove, — after the rough give-and-take quizzing of my Cambridge companions, — after the home-hits of the Archdeacon, — the easy good breeding of Jack Roxborough was like running upon wood pavements after rumbling over the disjointed stones of Cheapside.

But however pleasant to myself, our intimacy seemed to create uneasy sensations in others. — His sisters more especially. Though no interruption to their sisterly intercourse with him, (which, though studiously courteous, was neither warm nor familiar,) my presence at the Elms appeared unwelcome to *them*. While on the other hand, Dr. Temple contented himself with lifting his hat to me at a distance, as I might now do to the Queen; and Gripham, notwithstanding the unconfidential terms on which we lived, could not forbear inquiring of me, the first time we were alone together, whether I really intended to quit the neighbour-

hood before the return of Sir Robert from Buxton; and whether it were true that I had placed myself under such dangerous tutelage as that of Mr. Roxborough? —

"*Quite* true!" said I, without a moment's hesitation. "Charles Roxborough is my nearest neighbour of my own condition in life. We are likely to go through the world together; and I think myself peculiarly fortunate in finding, in this accursedly dull neighbourhood, a companion who is so much a man of the world."

"If Mr. Roxborough persevere much longer in his present habits," was the dry rejoinder of the man of business, "you may find other neighbours at Roxborough Elms sooner perhaps, Sir, than you look for."

"Why, is not the estate entailed?" said I, a little surprised.

"The place may be let. — Sir Gratian may be forced to dispose of his life interest."

"He is in difficulties then?"

"Not that I can presume to say. But a man who has such fearful stakes perpetually fluctuating as your friend, Mr. Roxborough, is well qualified to bring down an old house over his head."

"All this," said I, "may afford reasonable grounds for displeasure to his family, — though nothing like dissension is apparent between father and son. But I see no reason, Mr. Gripham, why it should operate against poor Roxborough with his friends. A man too successful at play, indeed, may be a dangerous acquaintance. But from all I can learn of Charley Roxborough, he ruins no one but himself."

And I can both say and swear that during the month I soon afterwards spent in his company at Glenhama *my* purse underwent no manner of danger. On the contrary, I was entertained by Charley and his friend, Lord Fortrose, with the hospitality of a brace of Arabs. — Capital sport — capital cheer — capital fun; — and without seeming to consider even my thanks due at the end of the visit, when, after a week's deer-stalking at the Duke of Banff's, we steered back towards the south.

It was not for me to inquire, after a day's work in which we

bagged three hundred brace of grouse, beside black and other game, wound up by a dinner dressed by the Earl's French cook, and washed down by the Earl's French wine, what chance I should have had of a share in such sport and such orgies, had I remained the penniless nonentity I emerged from Eagle House.

In the course of my visit, I had made one or two attempts with Charley to get at the secret of his sister's engagement. But Roxborough, who, even in his mellowest moments, was as dry as still champagne, was not to be betrayed into prating about his own family. Unlike the fellows whom my raw taste had chosen for college companions, so far from pretending to talk of "the Governor," or show up the rusticities of a father as different from himself as a frieze coat from a velvet doublet or a suit of Milan mail, he never alluded to Sir Gratian save in terms of distant respect.

"In the late Mrs. Temple's time," said he, in reply to one of my pointblank interrogations, "my sisters (who, from the early loss of their mother, are sadly at a loss for companionship of their own sex at Roxborough Elms) found Wrottesley Rectory a happy resource. As far as I remember, she was a charming woman, gentle, domestic — all that a woman ought to be. But she showed a sad lack of judgment in encouraging the impertinent pretensions of a younger brother of her husband, having his whole way to make in the world, and nothing to recommend him beyond tolerable abilities, cultivated by a tolerable education, — in an era when well-educated abilities are running barefoot in the streets! — I form no inordinate estimate of my sisters. They are simply good-looking, well-tempered, inoffensive girls, of undeniable pedigree, and twenty thousand pounds a piece at the death of their father. But even this is too good for a college tutor, who sprang from no one knows where, and is heir to no one knows what!"

And forthwith, without waiting for my rejoinder, the nature of which the indignant workings of my countenance must have tolerably foreshown, he fell into his usual vein of quiet extravagance; very different from the measured tone in which he studiously discussed, in all its bearings, the House of Roxborough Elms.

On my return to Cambridge, (thanks to the diversions secured to me by Charley, Lord Fortrose, and my stars, I had no leisure for so much as a passing visit to Hentsfield!) how coarse, and dull, and common-place, appeared the dissipations of Bob Barker, and the profligacy of my quondam friend, Hetton. A more accurate disclosure of my standing in the world disposed many who had hitherto only regarded me as a raw tiger, to propitiate the lord of thousands. But now that I had seen wrong things done in the right way, men of an ordinary stamp of dissoluteness delighted me not, — nor women neither. Parodying the threadbare philosophy of Poussin, I longed to inscribe on my vacant seat (after I had fallen under the table) — "I too have lived in Alsatia!"

Since I attained to years of philosophy, it has often struck me that writers of pretended autobiography, who would fain impart to their fictions the verisimilitude of memoirs true as my own, are decidedly wrong in representing their heroes as victims to *ennui* before they have plunged their inexperience in the billowy gulph of the world. — *Ennui* is a sensation of mental lassitude that denotes foregone labour — a species of moral atony consequent on previous over-excitement. The beardless boy who talks of been "used up," — the stripling who fancies himself "bored," — is simply an affected ass. The indolent hypochondriacism which has been erected into a chronic disease of the mind, under the conventional name of *ennui*, denotes a more solid foundation.

Even I, though my varied diversions at Glenhama and Banff Castle had done something towards creating an imaginary platitude around me, was as yet unqualified to be susceptible of *ennui*. The pulses of life were stirring too energetically within me; — those maddening pulses, whose precocious and abortive agitation is the cause of half the failures and false conceptions of mankind, by prompting genius to the misdirection of its powers ere it acquire the stamina requisite to impart sterling value to its efforts; and instigating the mere pleasure-lover into excesses which bequeath a stigma for life. Happy those who, compelled like my poor friend, Andrew Grove, to devote themselves, soul *and body, to the foundations* of a professional career, have no

leisure to indulge the ravings of youthful fancy, which would fain wing their way towards the sun with the waxen pinions of Icarus.

But methinks I am indulging in a vein that would better become the cassock of Archdeacon Roxborough.

I forgot to mention at the proper place, (and the omission may possibly have led my younger readers to wonder at the tameness with which I submitted to re-imprisonment at college after my baptism of *roueism* in whisky punch at Banff Castle and Glenhama,) that though I found no time for a second visit to Hentsfield, I kept to my engagement of spending a few days at Hawley Chase. Whether to propitiate my old guardian for future favours, or evince my gratitude for past, no matter: but I promise you, good reader, that, whatever the motive, the visit was a fearful sacrifice.

For, dreary as Wrottesley Hall had appeared to me in its pristine state of desolation, there was something too quaint and strange in the indecorous oddities of the house to beget melancholy impressions; — whereas every thing at Hawley Chase was dispiriting as Tadmor in the Desart! — The place was dead — fossil — petrified. — The withered old servants moved like pieces of mechanism. The furniture, the hours, the service, were those of a past century. The stately rooms had been so long uncheered by the movement of social life, that the very dust in their dark corners seemed drier than other dust. All was faded, cold, and colourless. Nothing of the graces of modern life — nothing of its vitality.

The pheasant-shooting, however, being such as could only have been afforded by the preserves of a gouty old Baronet of unsociable habits living in a thin neighbourhood, I had little leisure for the indulgence of my curiosity concerning the habits of the Hawley family. The old servants of the house, indeed, were as cold and taciturn as their master. But a few incidental observations satisfied me that the old man's dreariness of spirit had fallen upon him, and the paralysis of vital power upon his people and possessions, from the epoch, a quarter of a century before, of his quarrel with his son.

From that period, the sun had ceased to shine at Hawley.

Chase. No one seemed to care whether its grass grew or its harvests ripened. Where was the use, thought the venerable gardener, of cultivating flowers in pleasure-grounds where not a human being ever set foot? And neither to bailiff, forester, nor park-keeper, had the reserved old Baronet signified, by more than the due discharge of their liberal salaries, whether he were satisfied or dissatisfied with the aspect of his estate.

When I ventured to praise it to him — chiefly for want of a readier topic of conversation — a slight tinge of colour passed into his wan cheeks; but certainly not arising from any pleasurable emotion. Perhaps it panged him to hear a tribute to the beauty of possessions which strangers were to inherit. The truth was, Sir Robert had through life so systematically avoided the society of a younger generation, that not a word a man of my age was likely to utter but was calculated to shock, or give him pain.

He would not, I suspect, have exposed himself to the annoyance of my visit at all, but for his wish to impress unmistakably on my mind that the continuance of his favour depended not only on the fulfilment of my engagement to abide at college till I had taken my degree, but the credit with which I quitted the university at last. And though my readers may choose to consider me above all occasion for my guardian's patronage, let me tell them that favour of the nature to which he remotely alluded was such as even a prince of the blood might have courted.

For when, in the wantonness of my desire to join my friends Charles Roxborough and Fortrose at Melton, I ventured to inquire of what possible use could be a degree to a country squire living soberly on his property, he burst into a flow of words which not only caused me to marvel at his monosyllabic eloquence in the senate; but actually held forth a perspective of the union, at some future epoch, of the estates of Hawley Chase and Wrottesley Hall! —

"Have you no ambition, Sir?" said he. "Have you no desire to find yourself, in maturer years, in the foremost rank of the legislators of this mighty country and mighty century? And do you suppose that a churlish measure of instruction suffices to *qualify a man for such* a task, now that modern civilization has

doubled the limits of the ancient world? — Are not new continents, new colonies, new languages, new arts, new sciences, yearly springing up to tax the human faculties with further study? Are not political combinations and precedents perpetually defeated by the engenderment of national wants undreamed of by our ancestors? The world, Mr. Wrottesley, is pregnant with the fate of nations, — with a future far greater than the past. Already, the march of public events has outstripped my foresight; and great indeed would be my mortification, were I to find the man who, at some future time, will succeed to my place, so nerveless, so devoid of the glow of patriotism becoming his sanguine time of life, as to shrink from the trouble of mastering the mere alphabet of his public vocation." —

I was too powerfully struck by hearing myself invoked as his "successor" to find breath for vindication. For a glance of the old man's eye round the ancient dining-room, hung with family portraits, in which we were sitting after dinner when he made this sortie, convinced me that the expression he had used of "succeeding to my place," purported "my place in Yorkshire," rather than "my place in Parliament;" — Sir Gratian Roxborough having more than once informed me that the entail of the Chase had been cut off by the last generation, and that the present Baronet was heirless.

So immediately, indeed, did I commence my usual task of Castle building on these foundations, by picturing to myself the union of the two estates, and the claim which their possession would confer to the representation of the county, a worthy discharge of which duty might at some future time elevate me to the Upper House, where such landed property as mine was well entitled to be represented, that I was perhaps less attentive than I ought to have been to the further exhortations in which my well-intentioned guardian saw fit to indulge; warning me against undue intimacy with Charles Roxborough, not in the overbearing spirit of Gripham, but with the shrewd discernment of a man of the world.

"I understand that the young ladies, whom I have not seen since they were children, are pleasing and amiable," said he.

"But the man who marries either of them will one day or other be saddled with the maintenance of the whole family. Charles Roxborough's pursuits, Sir, are of a nature to beggar the bank of England."

Still harping on my prospects as his "successor," I was at as little pains to disculpate Charley as myself.

"So satisfied am I that the husband of either of Sir Gratian's daughters is marked for ruin," added my guardian, still more gravely, "that such a consideration has alone prevented my pressing on your recognition the claims of Dr. Temple's brother to the next presentation to the living of Rainham. Were Henry Temple to obtain it, I understand Caroline Roxborough would become his wife; and I have too much regard for both the brothers, to assist in forwarding such a consummation."

"Of which I am the more glad, my dear Sir," said I, "since, having no reason to surmise that pledges of any kind respecting the preferment in question had been held out by my late benefactor, I have offered it to one of my personal friends."

"Archdeacon Roxborough?" cried Sir Robert, with sudden animation.

"Neither him nor any one resembling him!" cried I, with equal eagerness. "I have promised it to a most excellent young man — a school-fellow of my own."

"Too young, then, by half," said the old gentleman, again interrupting me, "for the charge of so large a parish. Rainham has a population of twelve thousand souls — a terrible population, Sir — the population of a manufacturing town! — It would, in my opinion, be criminal to invest inexperienced youth with such a responsibility."

The value of the benefice, I argued, would well enable my young friend to keep a curate. On which hint ensued a lecture upon the indecency with which church preferment was so often made subservient to private interests; in which it was easy to trace the animosities of the staunch old Whig against the prevailing system of things at Carlton House. For though the Eldon *letters were* as yet unpublished, which have exhibited the Prince *Regent as bribing his Lord* Chancellor by a dish of his favourite

dainty of "liver and crow" to repay his dinner with the gift of a living to some courtly postulant, the bestowal of the highest benefices of the church to the hangers-on of the royal whist-table, or the household preceptor of some royal favourite, had already laid the foundation of abuses and discontents, which have shaken the established church to its very altar-stone.

In the dull, dreary old mansion in Arlington Street, where, during the sitting of parliament, Sir Robert, when his health permitted, led precisely the same life of routine as at his Yorkshire seat, I had, long afterwards, frequent occasion to listen to diatribes of a similar nature; produced by resentments which consolidated into a party (almost as much as the liberal principles they professed,) those former friends of the Prince of Wales, whom his political apostacy had converted into antagonists of the King. Not but that I believe the displeasures of Sir Robert Hawley to have been wholly of a public nature. With all his seeming apathy, he loathed from the bottom of his soul the frivolity of a sovereign who was doing his best to debase and emasculate the noblest institutions of the land, and convert our oaken-hearted Britons into a nation of fribbles.

As yet, however, I had not been admitted into the circle of which this sentiment was the bond of union. As yet, I was only the tyro who, having received a salutary lesson from the failures of his college *début*, was beginning to accent with reserve, if not mistrust, the overtures secured me by introductions from Roxborough and Fortrose, whose dashing exploits had constituted, in their Cambridge day, the despair of proctors and admiration of undergraduates.

The truth was, that my mind was so swollen by the new ambitions which had taken possession of it, as to "o'er inform its tenement of clay," and all the leisure which a zealous tutor could be prevailed on to leave upon my hands, was devoted to the pleasant pastime of Castle-building.

There was certainly some excuse for me! — The prospect of a rent-roll of seven and thirty thousand a year in one of the loveliest districts of a noble and prosperous county — encumbered with timber that cried aloud for the axe, and would furnish the

means of constructing a palace, in case that neither of the two capital mansions now existing satisfied my fastidious taste, — to say nothing of pictures and statues, cabinets of gems, and closets of old China, — family plate, family pictures, and family jewels, such as might have contented a duchess as dowry for her daughter, — and which had been flung, as it were, in the face of the threadbare gawkey of Eagle House, — was sufficiently exciting.

There was not (I thought) a chance—for let it not be supposed that the castles I was so fond of constructing were uninhabited castles: there was not the remotest chance that a rational being like Caroline Roxborough, influenced by an intelligent sister, and domineered over by a brother as knowing as a pet fox, would disdain the possession of all this, for the sake of a poor parson, drudging through de *corvée* of college tutorship, without patronage or prospect of preferment.

I never passed Henry Temple, in his white-seamed gown and shabby gaiters, in the gardens of Trinity, without laughing to scorn the possibility that a Miss Roxborough of Roxborough Elms would adhere to her engagement with one whom, in his present position, I regarded as little better than a hireling.

Nor did I ever acquaint myself, through "Bell's Life" or the "Sporting Magazine," with the defeats of Marmaduke, or distancing of Miss Jenny, without thankfulness for the ill-luck which seemed to have pounced as suddenly as the cholera on Charles Roxborough's study; satisfied that every thousand guineas extracted from his pocket became a clamp to unite my destinies still closer with those of his sister.

One good consequence, meanwhile, ensued from my Castle-building. My constant use of the aërial trowel kept both billiard-queue and dice-box out of my hand. The quiet schooling in vice bestowed on me in the course of the autumn by Charley Roxborough, had served to convince me that to play with such scamps as Bob Barker and Hetton, conveyed a certain loss both of money and credit.

"*The* fellows have not wherewithal to pay you," said he, "*were it possible for you* to rise a winner; and you will forfeit

all chance of getting into the best clubs or the best company, by being only heard of in theirs."

Such was the real motive of that abstinence from play, on which, six months afterwards, poor Andrew Grove congratulated me as a virtue. But why do I say "*poor* Andrew Grove?" Already, thanks to the zeal which had dictated the pursuits of his vocation, Andrew was a made man. Andrew had taken an honour. While *I* was wandering listlessly from pillar to post, with my greyhound at my heels, — nay, while *I* was even drinking deep of Glenlivet and ascending the heights of Ben Nevis, Andrew was quaffing the waters of Castaly and scaling Parnassus. By which means, he became a scholar, while I remained — I was going to say — an ass. Wiser perhaps (as an incipient M. P.) to define myself "Wrottesley Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall."

In the above capacity, by the way, it behoves me to expound to such of my readers as are circumstantial enough to delight in a dot over every i, that, though untempted to a personal visit to my family, a branch of my Pactolus, albeit a slender one, had been made to flow in the direction of Hentsfield. To my sisters, I had made liberal presents; to my mother, (pending the attainment of my majority,) an allowance out of my own allowance, of five hundred a year. But the annuity was burthened with a condition that proved far from palatable to Dora and Emily.

"In consideration of the marked approval with which my late revered relative, Mr. Wrottesley had contemplated her abstinence from the temptations of London life, I was desirous that she should not, till I was better able to secure her position in the world, hazard a season in town." —

In vain did my elder sister address me a solemn adjuration in two pages of Bath post; and my younger half a ream of French note paper, filled with alternate banterings and supplications, — each privately assuring me that her prospects in life would be irretrievably blighted by this postponement of their introduction to the eligibilities of London life; that three gray hairs had been detected among the raven tresses of Emily, while Dora's complexion was very far from what it used to be; — that the latter's only

chance of salvation lay in consulting a homœopathic doctor, and that unless the former were enabled to place her teeth under the care of Paterson Clarke, she should become a mumbler within the year.

It would not do! — In a reply by return of post, partaking of Dora's bombast and Emily's raillery, I unfolded a chapter or two of the science of worldly wisdom, for which I was indebted to the schooling of Charley Roxborough.

"The small pittance," I informed them, "which *at present* I was able to assign to my mother's use, was not such as might entitle the sisters of Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall, to take up their station in the class in which they must naturally desire to fix themselves for life. Better therefore to wait for a first-class place, than, by precipitancy, run the risks of the waggon.—As to their physical wants, the excellent Berkhampstead apothecary, old Steel, who had hitherto kept the family constitution in repair, was still at his post. Nor had I any fear that the seclusion of Hentsfield would prove fatal to their establishment in life; since even in London, what better fortune could attend one of them than to become Lady Stormont of Crowsden Grange? (I was well aware that the travelled man had already shuffled off and returned to the Levant.) Nor was Emily herself likely to pick up at Almacks a more eligible partner than Captain de Vesci; who, since her dismissal of him the preceding year, had proved a sufficiently good match for the only daughter of the Earl of Connaught."

No need to add, for the perfecting of the lesson I was disposed to give them, that Dora's rejected swain, George Whichcote, was now a London man, enjoying a commissionership of fifteen hundred a year, and on the eve of marriage with a Welch heiress. Even to prove my superior wisdom and the folly of their premature hauteur, I could not find it in my harrow heart to attribute consequence to the brother of my evil genius,—Tom Whichcote, of King's.

CHAPTER XII.

Worms in the bud, who ply the hateful art,
To sow corruption in the youthful heart. CREECH.

CHRISTMAS did not carry me back to Wrottesley, as my readers may expect, and as Sir Robert and Gripham decidedly expected. — Roxborough and Fortrose were chumming together at Melton, and I was rash enough to take at their word their promise to mount me for a week during the vacation.

I say rash enough. For though my overweening self-love secured me from all suspicion that the moment my back was turned, my bosom friends were the first to join in the general laugh provoked by my rawness in the field, I was made to pay pretty handsomely at *écarté*, — at which I was as great a novice as at a double fence, — towards the cost of their hunting stable and French cook. And *this* time, after the severe warning I had received from Sir Robert Hawley, it was impossible to apply to *him* for the means of liquidating my engagements; so that had not Roxborough kindly arranged the matter for me by backing bills at six months' date, I should have had to quit Melton still further lowered in self-estimation than by the consciousness of a broken collar-bone, a dislocated shoulder, and the loss of eighteen hundred pounds.

But what then? Had I not been the daily companion of the two most renowned members of the Old Club? — Had I not been hitched into an epigram by Alvanley, and a caricature by Meyler?

But what tickled my vanity more than even these distinctions, I had formed at Melton a close intimacy with Lord Hampden, — the ruling influence of the set of which Tom Whichcote was the shoe-black. — Not because he thought me less of a snob at Melton than when, a triton among minnows, he shyed my acquaintance at Cambridge; but because, being himself a minnow among the tritons of fashion, he wanted me as a stepping-stone to that of the unapproachable Charles Roxborough. Whereas all I wanted of *him* was an avouchment on our return to college that, if tacitly excluded from the clique of Lord Clanalbin and John Jocelyn, with their *betters* I stood better than they.

For
Use doth breed a habit in a man;

and the exclusive clique had accustomed me to dispense with their society, till I had ceased to miss it; and, released from the influence of the quiet but cutting irony by which Charles Roxborough, with seeming unconcern, knew how to pique me into the commission of whatever follies it suited him I should indulge in, I resumed the mode of life I had adopted in accordance with my guardian's advice and my own projects; and my well-thumbed copies of De Lolme, Hume, Russell, and Adam Smith, — to say nothing of Say, Malthus, and the pamphlets of Ricardo, piled on my table, proved that my studies had an object ulterior to university honours.

More from the want of means to figure in London than want of courage to attempt it, I intended, at the close of term, to proceed at once into Yorkshire; — probably to ascertain whether Wrottesley of Wrottesley Hall, now verging towards his twentieth year, would not be accepted as an escort to "wander by the brookside" in Wheledale, in place of the sable-suited knight who was engaged to private-tutor during the vacation a city alderman's son and heir, at some Devonshire watering place. — But as any premature demonstration of my attachment would have been fatal to the Machiavelic projects of Caroline Roxborough's brother, he wrote me so urgent a request to come and spend a week with him in his Albany Chambers, on pretence of accompanying him to Ascot, to witness the first running of an "own brother to Marmaduke," on which were founded the highest expectations, that I suffered myself to be caught. —

For with such a rent-roll as mine what fear that, within two years of the attainment of my majority, I should experience difficulty in a levy of supplies? The moment a hint of the state of my finances was afforded him, I found in Charley as assiduous a tutor in the sister arts of money-raising and money-squandering, as at Trinity College in logic, in the reverend Doctor Puzzlemywig.

London was as usual at that bewildering season of the year, far *more merry than wise*; and galvanized moreover by the unnatural

vitality which is apt to vivify the apoplectic corpse of modern society in the onset of a new reign. Dandyism, so far from falling with its banished dictator, was looking up, under royal patronage; and though prize-fighting had given place to yachting, snuff to smoking, and drinking to high play, there was quite enough vice and folly left in the great metropolis to satisfy the unsophisticated palate of nineteen. —

For though Dora and Emily on hearing of my visit to town, were pleased to connect my enjoyment of the season solely with balls and assemblies, I hope I need not do Charles Roxborough the justice to declare that he would as soon have accepted an invitation to dinner in Bedford Square, as allowed me to set foot on any floor where white satin sandals prevailed; save the *coulisses* of the Opera, to which his friendship with Ebers afforded us ready access. — For even had it not been his policy to secure me against matrimonial entanglement, it would have been fatal to his own immaculacy of fashion to stand sponsor in his own circle, to a tactless whelp like myself; and by inaugurating me only into the least desirable of the two or three sets with which horseflesh and hazard had brought him acquainted, — the set whose daily lounge was comprised within fifty yards round the corner of Clifford Street, (comprehending Long's, Stevens's, Stultz's, Andrews's, Storr and Mortimer's, and Delcroix's,) — the set whose sun rose at 3 P. M. and set at five in the morning, after stunning by garus punch the head-ache engendered by champagne, — he soon rendered me a subscriber to their faith, that a dancing man is the most wishy washy of deleterious compounds, and a ball-room a resort only pardonable to a man on the look out for a wife, — more especially if the wife of another.

To this I the more readily assented, from having grounded *my* abstract ideas of love and courtship upon a saunter beside a purling rill in a lonely valley; or a game at billiards in a country house with a red-nosed old baronet; his pretty daughters, in all their purity of mind and muslin, looking demurely on. Among the vagaries of my musing fits in later life, by the way, I have sometimes pondered on the undue account taken of the influence of the said mind and muslin in our social morals. — The de-

corum of English manners is, I am convinced, mainly attributable to the introduction of girls and clergy into the social circle. On the continent, where the first-named angelic purifiers of corruption are incarcerated in the school-room or convent, till they attain the matron privilege of hearing what ought not to be said, and seeing what ought not to be done, to the end of wrong-doing in their turn; and where, with the exception of the Pope's Nuncio gliding like a dark shadow through some diplomatic soirée, the priesthood, saving in Italy, is unrepresented in the worldly world, — a salutary check is wanting. — In England, on the contrary, no book must be written save such as affords no offence either to a black gown or white frock; — no equivocal topic must be discussed, — no unseemly jest hazarded. —

In my Stevens' and Long's days, I probably rebelled against this diet of pap. But now, that I have come to sound diet, roast mutton and old port, I am well pleased to bow to the clerical censorship of the press and missish ascendancy in the drawing-room.

In Catholic times and countries, where Cardinals, by their involvement in affairs of state, come to mingle in courtly pleasures — as the days of Wolsey in England, and Richelieu in France, — excessive forms of stateliness and solemnity are apt to prevail. But so long as the vest and cassock remain an integral rather than predominant portion of society, they perform the same useful function which the paper weight by my side executes for the volatile leaves on which it is placed — *i. e.*, to prevent their flying out of the window.

The above sapient observation purports to divert the reader's attention from a fact I would fain slur over in these my memoirs; namely, that, overlooking my promises to Hawley Chase, and considerably to the detriment of Castles in the Air constructed with the fond partiality of a Pugin or Wightwick, I did not make my appearance in Yorkshire till the partridges made theirs in the stubble; and, alas! somewhat less plump and far less strong on the wing! Old Nicholls looked even more shocked than glad to see me again.

I might not have made the sacrifice of the visit even then; but

that Roxborough was off for the Elms, to give a week's shooting to Fortrose, who possessed no manor south of the Tweed; and proposed our making the journey together. But I much doubt whether he would have afforded occasion for a meeting betwixt me and his sisters, but that he was to be on the spot, to influence what was going on.

"And could not my missus and the young ladies be persuaded to 'company you, Mr. Harry?" inquired my faithful old Adam, after wistfully surveying through his spectacles my lank cheeks and tremulous hands. "I 'm sure, Sir, (though God knows the air of the wolds might bring the very dead to life,) you 'd be none the worse for their nursing!"

"My mother and sisters are at Tunbridge Wells, Nicholls," said I; "a gayer place for them than this wilderness of a house. As to me, my good friend, provided the partridges give me work enough, a sportsman's hours and habits, and Yorkshire cheer, will soon enable me to bring up my lee-way."

Next day I hastened to pay my respects to Sir Robert; and from the measured formality with which he received me, had some grounds for apprehension that I was about to receive, in one fell dose, the remonstrances which ill-health and worse spirits prevented his dispensing in occasional letters.

But the old man had not uttered ten sentences relative to my London career, and the disrespect I had shown him by making no further attempt to see him in town than by leaving a card at his door, before the severe tones of his voice softened. Once or twice, as if inadvertently, he called me "Wrottesley," omitting his favourite "mister." But if the use of the name were inadvertent, its effect upon his ear was startling. It brought old times before him. — It brought old friends before him. The next epithet he used in addressing me was "my dear boy!" —

It was not, however, exclusively the influence of his old friend's name which tended to mollify his feelings towards me. From hints he unintentionally let fall, I perceived that he had been taking sly cognizance of my Cambridge career; and that certain proficiencies and distinctions of which I have refrained

from bragging to the reader, were favourably noted in the book of Hawley Chase. My guardian was evidently as proud of me as displeased at finding me Roxborough-ized from top to toe.

Not that he surmised a thousandeth part of the evil. All he knew was that I had been seen in Charley's phaeton at Ascot, which *he* considered as being publicly branded with the stigma of horse-racing; and that I had made my re-appearance in Yorkshire in company with him and a young Scottish Earl, who passed for one of his dupes whom he was gradually converting into a confederate.

Secretly rejoicing that in these publicities consisted the head and front of my offending, and that of my bills, bonds, and life-insurances, he knew no more than of Mademoiselle Estelle or Miss Jenny, I purchased leisure for a week's lounging at the Elms by promising to pass a day or two with him previous to my return to Cambridge.

For the Elms had become a dearer lounge than ever; not because Charley and Fortrose affected to receive from me points at billiards in place of those I had been forced to accept by poor old Sir Gratian, but because the girls, instead of drumming me out of my senses with the Battle of Prague, or snubbing me out of all patience by their saucy raillery, had become with me, as with the rest of their friends, meek, mild, and forbearing. Adela the most so. Though it was from Caroline I fain would have received thé last rose of summer to place in my button-hole, and the vacant chair at dinner to place myself by her side, it was by the Roxelana-faced Adela these symptoms of favour were squandered on me. Perhaps because Lord Fortrose was as much in love with her *petit nez retroussé* and laughing gray eyes as the extent of his Nock and Manton infatuations as a crack shot would allow. Perhaps, with sisterly consideration, to divert my attentions from Caroline, by whom it was Sir Gratian's pleasure (because Charley's pleasure) that they should be accepted.

Not that I found much reason to complain of the virulence of her opposition to their wishes. Now, indeed, that my glance has acquired surer perception, I know to what to attribute the *gentle amenity with which* she deigned to ramble with me in the

shrubberies, listening patiently to my announcement of all I intended to be — all I intended to do for Wrottesley — for the neighbourhood — for Yorkshire — nay, for the kingdom itself, (without, however, venturing to inquire what she would do for me in return, as regarded giving my old house and young heart a mistress.) But at that period I attributed to a growing estimation of my merits and sense of my devotedness, the languid smile with which she lent her ear to my braggartry. For oh! what adorer of nineteen can be expected to distinguish between the courtesy that purports to conciliate him as a friend, and the smiles that encourage his passion!

But what encouragement was needed? Was not the sight of her sweet face — was not the murmur of her kindly voice sufficient for my happiness? Wanted there other evidence of her goodness than the duteous and familiar love with which the villagers ran after her as we passed them in our walks, to petition, or pour benedictions on her head? — Or the silence in which she resigned herself to the coarse despotism of Sir Gratian, and the bitterer though more polished tyranny of her brother?

My only consolation now, after all that passed between us and the load it has left on my conscience, is that I *did* love her — yea, love her with all my soul; which, considering the unripeness of my age and shallowness of my nature, is some proof that there were a few ears of wheat among the tares.

But what signifies the good that lives, like truth in a well, at the bottom of a man's heart! It is that which lies on the surface, and which he brings into hourly action, that imports to his fellow creatures; as a hundred pound note in circulation is worth millions in the miser's chest.

Quantities of county neighbours, or rather all the neighbours the county could produce, mustered at the Elms during our stay, in my honour, or perhaps in that of Lord Fortrose. In saying "all," however, I should reserve Lord Meadowley. Of *him* not a whisper was heard. Not because his rank rendered him inaccessible to the Roxboroughs, for greater men were great friends with Sir Gratian; but because the only point on which

the old Baronet exhibited much consistency of self-will and self-government, was in a virulence of Toryism worthy of the dark ages. Squire Courtfield of Courtfield Manor, his county member for the last forty years, whose brass-buttoned blue coat and mahogany-topped boots, whose ante-progress dogmaticality, and sturdy refusal of a peerage, rendered him, in old Roxborough's eyes, the embodied representative of John Bull, and in those of Roxborough Junior, the Pope by whom the immaculacy of Church and State, of Turf and Game Laws was protected, as far as Yorkshire was concerned, from the pernicious innovations of the times, — was too fanatically worshipped at the Elms for toleration to be extended towards Lord Meadowley; who advocated uniformly in the Lower House the liberal principles so nobly supported by his venerable father in the Upper.

Aware of the mutual good-will which had existed between his Lordship and my predecessor, as well as of his staunch friendship for Sir Robert, I should not have been sorry to make his acquaintance; and, but that my guardian considered Whig politics as inherent a portion of Wrottesley Hall as its turret clock, he would probably have surmounted his peevishness of spirit and terror of the gout, and contrived the introduction in a sociable manner. But regarding my succession to his old friend's principles to be as certain as my succession to his lands and tenements, he unwisely left me open to the overtures of Courtfield Manor, and the cajoleries of my friend Charley.

That a Charles Roxborough could concern himself about politics at all, never, in short, entered the head of the recluse. Sir Robert conceived Charley's object in his visits to Oatlands, to consist in horse-flesh and high play; blind to the fact that the very atmosphere of the place was so charged with high Toryism, that a man must imbibe it or flee.

The truth was — that, looking forward to the accession of an heir apparent (whose advent, had it ever occurred, would unquestionably have revolutionized the kingdom,) the favour of his Royal Highness the Duke of York was courted by my knowing friend far more with regard to the Red Book than his betting *book. The rapid race of* ruin he was engaged in, rendered it

necessary for Charley to secure himself a refuge against a rainy day; under which prospect it was no bad spec to undermine his way to a lay lordship of the Admiralty or junior lordship of the Treasury under the sceptre of Frederick I.

Not a trace of self-interest, however, was visible in the respectful cordiality with which he welcomed the county member to his father's house.

Accustomed to hear old Courtfield spoken of in Yorkshire with the utmost deference, not alone by scrubs like Gripham and Klose, or gapers after government loaves and fishes, like the very Venerable Archdeacon Roxborough, — but by people so high in their own esteem that even the Ark of the Covenant would have been hardly sacred in their eyes, I had imbibed a sort of awe-struck veneration for him, much such as the Venetians may have felt for the brazen lions constituting the post-office of the Council of Ten. I had formed a vague notion of the old senator as containing within his bald head as within a deed-chest, an abstract of Magna Charta, Blackstone's Commentaries, and the works of Archdeacon Paley; and would have defied the united efforts of Trin. Coll. Cam., the Inner Temple, and a Secret Committee united, to hold the best of it against Courtfield of Courtfield Manor.

At our first meeting, the old gentleman certainly did his utmost to keep up the illusion. Though he talked racily of fox-hunting and sturdily of ploughing matches, the moment politics were incidentally brought on the *tapis*, he replied by a monosyllabic growl, — mysterious as an oracle, — stalwart as a Commander of the forces. — And great was my amazement on discovering in later life, that the simile of the lion of St. Mark held good in more points than one: — that he was important less as the organ than as the symbol of a party. —

But in those days, party politics were a different affair from now. The Reform Bill did for Parliament what the downfall of John Company did for China; *i.e.* exterminate mystery, plundering and pilfering as thoroughly as the establishment of railroads is about to extinguish brigandage in the Roman States; whereas in the era of rotten boroughs, sinecures, and patent places, all

was close and cunning as in the land of mandarins and Jossery before a few Britannia broadsides opened the eyes of Pekin.

I contented myself, however, with contemplating old Courtfield from as humble a level as though he had been the lion at the top of Northumberland House, and I a gazer in the Strand; leaving it to my friend Charley to whisper gravely with him over the great letters of the Courier, and emulate with due solemnity the silent vibration of his head whenever the name of Henry Hunt (now drowned in the waters of oblivion,) or some other radical leader, was pronounced in their abhorrent hearing.

"You 're a sad rogue, Harry Wrottesley,—a very sad rogue!" sputtered Archdeacon Roxborough, poking me facetiously between the ribs on running against me, the first evening he discovered me between the double doors of the billiard-room, stealing away from one of these mystic palavers. "*You* don't know how to take care of yourself, I suppose!" And I, who, so far from surmising that he believed me intent on keeping my political principles safe from being picked and stolen by the two confabulating Tories, fancied my purpose to be only too apparent of enjoying myself by the side of Adela and Caroline while the lynxes remained at bay, — was fain to beg for mercy, and entreat him to reduce his quizzing to tones inaudible in the gallery.

But whatever the Archdeacon thought about the matter, let me trust that my readers know too well what they are about, to be ignorant what *I* was about; and not to appreciate the advantage of being able to carry on my flirtation under cover of the Archdeacon's roaring bass of applause at his kinsman's and the county member's manifestoes, breathing Bastilles and penal statutes in every period.

"Do you know, Mr. Wrottesley," said Caroline, when, in spite of the stentorian raillery of the burly priest, I found my way at last to their work-table, "do you know that Adela and I have been committing county treason to-day, and quarrelling with *Doncaster* for carrying you off! But for Charles and his bay mare, *and the St. Leger*, we might perhaps be able to induce you to

remain at the Hall till you have no choice but to return to Cambridge."

Almost blushing that the lady of my love should deliver such a compliment *à brûle pourpoint* without a blush, I replied as beseemed me, that "it would require very little pressing to determine me to send all the cups and sweepstakes of the United Kingdom to — (I paused in defining the whereabout calculated to convey the strongest attestation) — if I could only hope that my society was not quite so unwelcome to them now, as on occasion of my former visit?" —

And the simultaneousness with which both sisters ejaculated "Unwelcome? How could I suppose it!" would have done honour to the best rehearsed duet ever executed by Mario and Grisi.

"I supposed it," I said, "because a fatally good memory sometimes carried me back to certain days less pleasant than the present, when the Battle of Prague was played for my entertainment, and I was driven out like an enemy's dog to walk home in the snow."

"If you ever saw a strange hound introduced into a well-filled kennel, Mr. Wrottesley," said Adela, laughing, "you must have noticed how its new companions fall upon it, and make it afford proof of its quality. So it was with *us!* Don't look affronted at my comparing you to a puppy, — but so, I assure you it was! — We had been taught to believe that you were come to settle at the Hall, and play the mastiff over us all; and therefore attempted the first snarl."

"Which fairly drove me out of the neighbourhood!" said I. "Afraid that those who showed their teeth so soon, would end with biting, I hastened away lest I should receive a wound that could not be cured or forgiven."

"Better have stayed and defied us!" retorted the laughing beauty. "Puppy policy should have taught you that cowards create a double allowance of antagonist. However, you made proof of the truth of another proverb; — by 'running away,' you have been enabled to return and fight another day."

"Not to *fight*, thank Heaven!" cried I, with as tender a

glance towards Caroline as I dared adventure. "Nor should I presume to recur to those unpropitious days, but for my consciousness that there is a rainbow in the sky: — by what providence vouchsafed, I will not now inquire."

"Do pray inquire," exclaimed the outspoken Adela; — "for we have not the least objection to tell you! It was Dr. Temple who told us how pleasant a companion you had proved at the Rectory, on the very day we so inexcusably gruffed you away from the Elms." —

"*Dr. Temple?*" muttered I, a little astonished.

"And who congratulated us and himself on the acquisition you were likely to prove to the neighbourhood."

"Dr. Temple!" I again repeated, absolutely aghast. "Why from that day to this, he has never offered me the common civility of a morning visit, owed by one gentleman to another."

"Ay, but surely not by a middle-aged clergyman to a very young gentleman," remonstrated Adela.

"Better say *boy* at once, Miss Roxborough!" cried I, a little nettled.

"A very young gentleman, too, who, being in a position to confer obligations on him," added the gentle Caroline in a lower voice, — "demanded in any intercourse between them, the most circumspect maintenance of his dignity." —

"But why not speak fairly out, my dear Car?" rejoined Adela. "Since Mr. Wrottesley wishes us to be his friends, why not show him that we deserve to be such, by telling him the exact truth?"

Yet even while proceeding thus boldly to unfold what she knew would be offensive, Adela Roxborough's voice faltered; and she was scarcely audible when adding that the intelligence Dr. Temple had received of my proceedings at Cambridge, was not of a nature to make the clergyman of my parish *very* eager in his attentions.

"His brother the tutor, in short," said I, with the utmost *bitterness*, "was not only at the trouble to play the spy upon my *conduct, but ungentlemanly* enough to forward to my own neigh-

bourhood notes of those boyish follies which he is paid for repressing in my companions!"

"Ungentlemanly and Henry Temple are words which, by no possibility, can ever be brought into conjunction!" retorted Adela with spirit. "The Doctor's information, I believe, was derived from ourselves, — who heard of your intimacy with billiard markers and blacklegs from a Cambridge man whom we met at the Duke of Sheffield's; a college friend of his son Lord John." —

"Tom Whichcote, for a thousand!" cried I, gasping for breath. "But why circulate what you could not be certain was true," added I, — addressing myself more particularly to Caroline; "in a quarter too where it must do me irreparable injury!" —

"Perhaps," interrupted Adela, coming to her sister's aid, "we might be desirous of exposing you to admonition from one who is charged by the law of the land with the cure of your soul!"

"And to whom it was essential to know and understand you," added Caroline, with so feeling a blush as to provoke me beyond description.

"That is to say, essential to understand the views and principles of the patron of Rainham!" cried I, throwing aside all reserve. "For after all, my offence in Dr. Temple's eyes was not that I played billiards, shirked chapel, or exceeded my allowance ; but that I had promised the best living in my gift, without consulting him, to a bosom-friend of my own; — one of the best scholars at Cambridge, and worthiest creatures in the world!" —

A slight exclamation from the lips of Adela caused me to glance towards her sister, whom I beheld suddenly reduced to the whiteness and rigidity of marble. Lord Fortrose, who was approaching us at the moment, flew on hearing Miss Roxborough's cry for air, in search of a glass of water.

But even when, after opening windows and imbibing a tumbler of iced water, the poor girl's complexion and presence of mind were tolerably restored, was it likely that I should forgive Henry

Temple this open and unmistakeable demonstration in his favour, more particularly as, from that moment, the amenity previously exhibited towards me ceased; so as to leave no doubt of its having arisen, on the part of those two treacherous girls, from a project to entrap my good-will and extort a promise of patronage for "the tutor."

I went back to Cambridge hating Henry Temple with a degree of hatred, that would scarcely have been bitterer had he been once my bosom friend! —

CHAPTER XIII.

Leeze me on drink! It gie's us mair
Than either school or college;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge,
But whisky-gill, or penny-stoup,
Or any stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion,
By night or day. BURNS.

EVERY now and then a tremendous uproar is made in the world, and a quantity of fire-and-faggot letters addressed to the editors of the Sunday papers, by those who, because they are lovers of license, fancy themselves lovers of liberty, and consequently sign themselves "Fiat Justitia," or "A True Briton," — against the abuses of university discipline and the tyranny of proctors. For my part, I only wonder how so many grains of gunpowder can be stowed together, within reach of lucifer-matches and tinder-boxes, as there exist in our universities without explosions demanding a still stricter exercise of authority.

What a set we were in my time! There was a roaring blade, — an Honourable Blank Blank, living on the same staircase as myself — who, after figuring as an ensign in the Guards, and lieutenant of Hussars, and being disbanded after Waterloo, was reading for orders, for the benefit of a family living; a fellow capable of converting into Don Juans a whole cloister of Carthusians! In tickling up jugs of gin-punch, and other nameless *modifications of the* union of acid, sugar, spirit, and a slight tinge

of *aqua pura*, the Broadway of New York might have become his scholar! — And after the gin-punch what orgies! —

It is true, both the punch and the appendix disagreed a little with mathematics, — with chapel, — with the decencies of college subordination; and, what was worse, brought me once more into collision with individuals towards whom companionship with Roxborough and his set had begun to inspire me with some disgust. But the man who "puts an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains," — whether a Cantab revelling in gin-punch, or a Regent in Garus, — is as sure to stumble into a pitfall or lose himself in a quagmire, as the shipwrecked knaves in the "Tempest," after taking Caliban for their guide.

I was not, however, the only man fancying himself a fine gentleman, who forfeited his shape and character by tasting the Circean cup, — *i. e.*, the jugs of whiskey-punch of the Honourable Blank Blank. My friend Hampden — whose vulnerable heel lay (Irishly speaking) in his ear, and who, like Cassio, was to be beguiled at any hour of the day or night into an excess, no matter how perilous to body or soul, by the temptation of an "exquisite song," — would have resisted the honourable punch-compounder's Nepenthe, but for the trolling of his lays. But as he sang as well as he brewed, we lived and drank together, and, after drinking, broke the peace and the heads of constables; — and, but for the especial recommendation I had received from Wrottesley Rectory, to the tender mercies of the conscript fathers of my college, my university prospects and the Castles I had been building on their scaffold-poles, would have been speedily flung down in the dust.

It is not, I am afraid, in the nature of man — more especially of man being drunk — to enjoy his brutal pleasures to the utmost, without, in some way or other, making woman his victim.

There lived, just then, in one of what Bob Barker called the back-slums of Cambridge, a miserable atom of a tailor, — a thing of shreds and patches, — a botcher for gyps, — an every thing you please that is most ignominious of his ignominious calling; — who, in spite of his wretchedness, had managed to

possess himself, in the shape of wife, of one of the prettiest little creatures in the world.

Though a Cambridge man, and having abided there from the time his goose was a gosling, Sam Nixon had known better than to marry one of his townswomen. As jealous as the Moor of Venice, he had gone in search of his partner for life as far as the daffodils of Cottenham; and Nancy was still the humble, simple, honest, little country girl he had taken from the churn and cheese-press to be his bride. Whether attached or not to the little tailor, she was attached to her duties; and, during her three years of married life, had stood and withstood as many sieges as the Rock of Gibraltar.

For a fellow unsettled in his conjugal reliance to reside within the precincts of a university, is much as if a hare were to make her form in a kennel of greyhounds. Poor Nixon, who made so little secret of his jealousy that he had been more than once rough-musicked by his neighbours for thrashing his pretty little wife, to punish her for being looked at by forward gownsmen, or moved by the same vague passion for coercion, which causes men to beat their spaniels and walnut trees, in the hopes of mending them, — ought to have pitched his tent in Bath or Bloomsbury, or any other exclusive resort of the spinster species, rather than in ranting, roaring Cambridge. For both husband and wife led a sorry life of it. The moment it transpired among the undergraduates that an ineffectual attempt to deliver a letter to the tailor's wife, on the part of some beardless Lauzun, had been the cause of driving Nixon out of his wits, and terrifying his chaste moiety out of her skin, it became as favourite a joke to knock at the snip's door, and inquire "whether Nancy Nixon lived there?" — as the popular hoax of "Monsieur Tompson," or "*Portier, donne-moi une mêche de tes cheveux.*"

Especially among the dissolute loungers with whom I was just then associating; — and, by degrees, what was sport to us, was nearly death to the friendless little woman: who was not only *daily licked by* her husband, but came to be regarded amongst *her neighbours as a suspicious* character. To afford a moment's

excitement to our worthless lives, the poor soul wasted the whole of hers in crying over a delicate child of two years old; who, in this perpetual fount of tears, seemed scarcely to recognise its once merry little mother.

I have known my punch-brewing neighbour bribe Hampden with one of his choicest songs, to go and knock at Nixon's door, or throw a nosegay into his wife's window; for the sole pleasure of seeing the irate little tailor emerge from his den, in his shirt sleeves and spectacles, foaming at the mouth and blaspheming while endeavouring to catch the offender in the fact; when he was saluted with shouts and cheers from our party, lying in ambush for the enjoyment of the pantomime. But of poor Nancy Nixon's bruises which were to be endured behind the curtain, which of us took thought? For what had a tailor's wife better to do in the world than be pinched and kicked, in order to afford sport for the Philistines!

One night, in the height of our drunken revels, an exploit was proposed by Hampden, which, on the evening following, was duly carried into execution, without more evil aforethought on our part than the hope of getting rid of a few idle hours; though in its results, alas! the source of heartbreak to many.

Little Nixon was to be decoyed from home at nightfall, on pretence of a job, and locked up in the room of a gyp who was the Honourable Blank Blank's familiar spirit; and who, living as near the sky as the attics of Jesus could place him, was safe in his domestic castle against intrusion or enlargement.

As soon as the tailor was thus secured, Nancy was to be carried off in her turn by a message conveyed by another gyp, that she was wanted and waited for by her husband. The majority were for having her brought straight to Hampden's rooms, where one of our so-called wining parties was prepared: — an orgie well calculated to astonish the weak mind of poor Nancy. Some were of opinion that the tailor's pretty wife would make but a feigned resistance; and take the goods the gods and Litchfield had provided for her in the shape of pine apple and champagne. *I* thought otherwise, (being one of those whose homage she had indignantly rejected;) and it was at my suggestion that prepara-

tions were made for reducing her to stillness in case she proved hard to manage.

For the emended edition of our plot consisted in conveying her to the rooms of some sober scholar, — some reputed misogynist, where she was "to be left till called for;" that is till Samuel Nixon in person was brought to convict her of the delinquency of being surprised in the domicile of an undergraduate. Not a blockhead of us but had of course some favourite aversion to put forward for the unappropriated place of victim in the *dramatis personæ*. Every body had some one to suggest, — his tutor, — his German master, — his cousin, — or the sap whose acquirements put his own duncehood to shame. At length, we drew lots for the delight of singling out the unhappy wretch to be hoaxed; and most unluckily, chance favoured myself!

For it happened that I owed a grudge to Andrew Grove for a tremendously long homily which he had taken the liberty of addressing to me in writing; (seeing that to his *viva voce* lessons I had long turned a deaf ear;) to implore me "on the knees of his heart" not to tarnish the honour of a destiny bright and hopeful as mine, by associating with those who were bankrupts in reputation as well as paupers in principle and intellect.

"By Jove, Master Andrew shall pay for his preaching!" was my rapid resolve. "Andrew Grove, that Joseph-Surface man of sentiment and pattern of decorum, shall for once be put to the blush!" —

The project prospered in all its preliminaries. The little tailor threw himself headlong into the snare; and Mrs. Nixon, when summoned in her husband's name to bring his pattern-book and measures to certain rooms in — Hall, to which she was carefully conducted by our gyp, saw nothing to excite her alarm unless the chance of a cuffing for her pains, if she presumed to loiter by the way.

But alas! thanks to chapel and other obstacles, the whole thing was postponed till so late an hour, that, by the time the *little* woman crossed the threshold of our pandemonium, a *sufficient number of bottles* of claret had been discussed, to justify

the agony of alarm with which she started back, and tried to make her escape, on perceiving

Our table richly spread
Without a lady at the head;

adorned with glaring lights and glowing faces!

"Nancy Nixon, Nancy Nixon for ever! — Bumpers and three times three with one cheer more for Nancy Nixon!" — was the universal cry, when her conductor, after coolly locking the door behind her, placed the key in his pocket.

And Nancy's tearful appeal to our humanity, to let her take her departure quietly before her absence from home had been noticed, or any thing occurred to bring down retribution on her head, was drowned in loud hurrahs in her honour.

The terrified woman had nothing for it but to sink down in the furthest chair, cover her pale face with her handkerchief, and weep. As to accepting our invitation to a place at table or a glass of Blank Blank's nameless nectar, either iced or steaming, the Lady in Comus could not have been more chastely temperate.

"Indeed and indeed, gentlemen, I am an honest woman! Nixon, when he comes to hear of this, will break every bone in my skin!" was sobbed out at intervals by way of reply to our importunities.

But with the fear of the proctor before our eyes, — albeit those eyes saw none of the clearest, — it became necessary to hurry the *finale* of the drama. And when the poor terrified Nancy proceeded to shriek and threaten, on seeing us rise tumultuously from table for a sortie, swearing that she must bear us company, — to my shame be it written, that I was the first to propose stopping her cries with a handkerchief, and carrying her off like a struggling Sabine by force of arms!

I had some sort of idea that Andrew, who habitually rose before either sun or lark, would have retired to rest before we attempted to storm his castle; and I anticipated some sport, when roused by our loud knocking, he proceeded to open the door, attired in either his dressing-gown or less, we thrust into his room our trembling captive, and by a precipitate flight, left

him without defence or apology to meet the fury of her exasperated husband.

But I had reckoned falsely. The Andrew who answered to our impertinent summons was not only up and dressed, but much more himself than any one of our riotous party. That he could not at first be made to understand what we were come about, was no proof to the contrary; for what rational being was likely to preconceive so cruel an outrage? And that he fancied the half-fainting woman suddenly borne into his chamber, to be the victim of some painful accident, and that we were bringing her there for refuge and succour, was an interpretation that only too well explained the difference between *his* motives and conduct, and our own.

But the moment Andrew began to suspect that he was the object of a mystification, his blood kindled. Uncertain, at first, whether the female we had seated in the arm-chair beside his study-table, covered with important papers and laborious calculations, were our victim or accomplice, — whether she were weeping for shame or crying drunk, —there was nothing to divert his attention from ourselves.

With manly frankness, he singled me out for an explanation.

"Wrottesley!" cried he, trembling in voice and limb with ill-repressed indignation, "you are the only person here justified by even the poor plea of acquaintanceship, in intruding upon me at this hour, in pursuance, I presume, of some drunken frolic. It is therefore from *you* I exact your immediate departure; and *to* you I look for an apology at some more sober moment."

"Apology, indeed? — Drunken frolic?" — Shouts of derision from the whole party greeted his oration. While Hampden coolly offered him a cigar by way of refreshment, the rest of the party affected to make themselves most audaciously at home.

But by this time, Nancy, whose hearing was not gagged as well as her lips, began to understand what was going on. — Starting from her seat, she clung to the arm of Andrew, as he was preparing for the summary ejectment of Lord Hampden, who was nearest the door; and drew all his attention towards her miserable plight.

The botcher was perhaps his tailor. For no sooner had he turned the light of the shaded lamp in which he was accustomed to burn his midnight oil, upon the features of the unfortunate woman clinging to him for protection, than he exclaimed "Mrs. Nixon? Gracious Heavens! *Poor* Mrs. Nixon!" — and placed her in a chair with as much deference as *I* might have used towards Caroline Roxborough.

Again, our acclamations caused the walls to shake. "Vivant Nancy Nixon and Amadis de Gaul!" cried one and all. To which I added, more coarsely than the rest, "Vivant the tailor's wife and Andrew of Wilsbury Farm!"

Already, however, the imperfect utterance of the unfortunate Nancy had rendered him cognizant of her situation; and hastily, but with gentle care, he drew the handkerchief from her mouth. — Alas! it was covered with stains; and a frightful flow of blood followed its removal.

"Wretches!" cried Andrew, looking fiercely at those whose cry of triumph was still unquelled.

"Not wretches, but wretch!" interrupted I with drunken pertinacity. "Address yourself to *me*, Mr. Redresser of Grievances. It was *I* who proposed the gagging!"

"*Coward!*" was all he *did* say to the reeling fool who advanced threateningly towards him. Upon which, with a single blow, I felled him to the ground, and placed my foot upon him as he lay.

"Bravo, Wrottesley! — Bravo, bravissimo, Wrottesley!" resounded on all sides from those who attributed to strength and courage what was the mere result of his unguarded attitude.

But so absorbed was *I* in my triumph, and *they* in their gratulations, that the proctor and his myrmidons had effected their entrance unobserved by the door through which one of our party, more chicken-hearted or more overcome by wine than the rest, had made his escape during the uproar, leaving it open behind him.

The noise and confusion prevalent in the room seemed to exhibit, in the light of a drunken brawl, what our turbulent passage through the streets with poor Nancy, had caused to be re-

presented to him in still darker colours, so as to hasten him in full authority to the spot.

But, even in this point of view, there were two objects present demanding immediate consideration.—Andrew, sprawling helpless, as if blind drunk on the floor; and Mrs. Nixon, with her features swollen, and her disordered dress spattered with blood.

"I assure you, Sir," hiccupped Hampden, "that we are here only from motives of humanity — only, Sir, with the most honourable intentions. But for us, this unfortunate female, — who, fall — fallen as she is, has still a claim to the pro — protection, from every man of honour, d — due to the meanest of her sex — would have fallen a victim to ass — ass — assassination."

"Yes, Sir; yonder drunken miscreant would have murdered her!" interposed the Honourable Blank Blank, — who sadly wanted to get the Riot Act read, that we might disperse at once; when a few choice spirits would probably make their way back to his rooms, to drink up what remained of his potations.

"But how came it, Sir, that this unfortunate female was conveyed hither by violence?"

"Nancy Nixon, I declare!" suggested, half aside, one of the constables. —

"That she was conveyed hither, I say, by a breach of the public peace?" resumed the proctor. — "Such, I think," added he in a whisper, addressing his vergers, "was the information I received?"

"The wretch lying at your feet, Sir, was the party by whom she was torn from her unfortunate husband's violated home," resumed Hampden, with drunken solemnity. "If we consented to escort him, it was with the humane intent of rendering assistance, in case of need, to the distressed female."

"I scarcely know what to make of it at all!" sighed the proctor, — shrugging his shoulders with the distressed look of the Burgomaster of Saardam (just then rendered popular by Liston.) "To-morrow, the business shall be investigated. Meanwhile, these offenders, — this drunkard and his miserable companion," — continued he, glancing at the suffering Nancy, and still prostrate *Andrew, "shall pass the* night in the Spinny."

They passed it there; — in that self-same noisome den which has lately acquired a wretched notoriety. But even on the morrow the mystery was but imperfectly cleared up. Whether, when it came to the scratch, the craven tailor had not courage to denounce "a nob" like Hampden, and a set of dare-devils like his associates, — or whether, from the civility with which Andrew Grove had uniformly treated his wife, when giving orders for the patching or turning of his waistcoats, he really inferred undue intimacy between them, — the fact of having discovered Nancy exactly where an anonymous letter had warned him that, when released from durance at Jesus, he *should* find her — at Andrew's rooms, while the gyp by whom he had been captured, and at last enlarged, had been careful to mention the same unlucky name as that of his employer, — he seemed convinced of the culpability of the parties.

His testimony, at all events, was such that *we* were fully exonerated, and punished only by a slight fine, and an any thing but slight homily, in retribution of our irregularity of hours and habits; while Nancy was delivered over to the correction of her husband; and Andrew, the partner of her delinquency, — the unprotected, nameless scrub, whose previous correctness of reputation seemed to render him, in this discovery, only the greater Tartuffe, — Andrew, with his face still swollen from my blow, and his heart swelling under a sense of injustice, — Andrew was sentenced to rustication!

Like most people outrageously drunk overnight, we were still only half sober when the investigation took place; and in the feverishness of our souls and bodies, thought it an excellent joke to let the friendless paria of Peter House bear the penalty of our folly. And when, at a later period of compunction, I endeavoured to remedy the evil, by myself addressing to the Caput and the masters of both our colleges, a frank confession of my share in the trespass, and a full and perfect exculpation of Andrew, — I passed simply for a Pythias sacrificing myself for my Damon; and was even complimented for my generosity on the occasion, by more than one of the Dons, who, thanks to Dr. Temple's

"Open Sesame," were unwilling to close their hearts against the excellence of my venison and character.

I did no good to Andrew therefore, though some harm to myself. So far from reversing his sentence, all that I asserted was distorted into proof, that if I had been the ringleader of the gang, he, — whom the very husband of the woman "taken in being gagged," denounced as criminal, — he, whom circumstantial evidence proved to be my intimate friend, — was, to say the least of it, an active accomplice. Was it likely that I, whose familiar visits to him had often excited wonder in his college, where his reserved habits of life and sturdy sense of independence rendered him far from a favourite, should really have dealt him the knock-down blow which was evidently invented to palliate the disgraceful state of intoxication in which he was detected? —

No! An example, they said, was wanted; and poor Andrew's sentence was confirmed. But my own personal dignity lost so much by the investigation, and the reprimand and affronts I received in its progress, that I had no choice for it, but in my turn to quit Cambridge.

CHAPTER XIV.

C'était un bon enfant dans la force du terme;
Très bon, et très enfant; mais quand il avait dit,
"Je veux que cela soit," il était comme un terme.
Il changeait de dessein comme on change d'habit,
Mais il fallait toujours que le dernier se fit. H. DE MUSSET.

I DID what I still considered the best thing to have been done; *i. e.* hurried down into Yorkshire, and told my own story to Sir Robert.

"Of course!" quoth some Mrs. Candour of a reader, "and no doubt to your own disadvantage!"

Ay! as I live by bread! Not a shade did I soften of my egregious turpitude and folly. The only person weak enough to extenuate both, was my kind guardian. Moved either by my reliance on his clemency, or because the lapse of three-score years and ten tend to the softening of the human head as well as the *human heart, nothing* would persuade him but that somehow or

other, his ward had been ill-used. Already it had become tolerably plain to me, that the possession of eighteen thousand a year, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins; and that it sometimes goes so far as to transfer them to the shoulders of less fortunate persons.

"See the ill-consequences of sending a boy to a second-rate country school," murmured the old gentleman at the close of my confessions. "But for *that*, you would never have made acquaintance with such a person as young Grove!"

"Surely you must perceive, dear Sir," cried I, "that he alone has been the sufferer—that he, the only innocent person in the business, has been the *only* sufferer."

"And what do you call your expulsion, then?"

"Not expulsion. There was no expulsion in the case."

"At all events you were forced to withdraw from Cambridge on the eve of taking a degree which would have done you honour for life."

"And Andrew, on the eve of taking orders, which would have secured him ease and competence."

"Why must he needs be a clergyman? At *his* age, a man has time enough before him to enter into some other profession."

"After rustication?"

"If not one of the learned professions, some honest calling. You say he is only a farmer's son."

"A yeoman's son."

"Then why not article himself to an attorney?"

"A sad exchange, my dear Sir, for a profession which would have placed him at once on the level with gentlemen, and gratified the honest pride of his family, which this unlucky business levels with the dust."

"Say rather overweening pride, my dear boy. What business have such people to educate a son for the church; in which, after all, he might never have earned his bread? A curacy of forty or fifty pounds a year would most likely have been his portion, till, in his old age, some meagre piece of college preferment fell in."

"You forget, Sir," said I, adding a considerable number

of cubits to my stature as I delivered myself, "you forget, Sir, the living of Rainham!"

"Rainham?" ejaculated my poor guardian, aghast. "Why you don't mean to say that this yeoman's son—this dissolute Bachelor of Divinity — is the person you intended to impose upon the county as a creditable incumbent for so important a cure as Rainham?"

"Do not say 'dissolute,' Sir. There does not exist a man of purer morals or more exemplary life."

"Pshaw, Sir — pshaw, my dear boy! Would a disreputable woman like this Nancy Dixon—Nixon—what is it?—have ventured to take refuge in the rooms of a young man of exemplary character? No, no! your friend appears to have been as loose a liver as yourself; and sooner than see such a fellow inducted into a living of which my poor friend Wrottesley was the patron, and his uncle and grand uncle former rectors, much as I counted, Harry, on your Cambridge honours, I would have had matters turn out as they stand."

"But my dear, dear Sir Robert," cried I, interrupting him, "you cannot have understood my hasty and confused account of the business if you imagine that either Andrew Grove, or even the tailor's unlucky wife, were anything but a victim!"

And again I went over the grounds, deliberately and circumstantially; but without shaking the prejudices of judge or jury. Whatever might be the case with Andrew, it was clearly lucky that I had not to get forward in life by my eloquence, if my present ill-success were predictive of my career at the Bar; for at the close of my pleading, Sir Robert renewed his former ejaculation of "A sad business, indeed; but all the result, my dear Harry, of your having been brought up at Eagle House."

As it mattered little to poor Andrew whether Sir Robert went to the grave aware or unaware of the bitterness of his aggrievements, I gave up the point. No use talking about it! He *chose* to believe me the injured party, and a wilful man must have his way.

I had pressing motives, too, for conciliating my venerable *guardian. Though able* as a minor to postpone the settlement of

my affairs at Cambridge, I was desirous to avoid leaving a double cloud upon my name; and to enable me to discharge my embarrassments, the aid of Sir Robert was indispensable. I might, perhaps, have succeeded in coaxing over Gripham — who, unable to keep up the farce of an intended litigation of the will, was now my most obedient humble servant; — but this I should have scorned. Or I could have obtained the sum in request with the aid of Roxborough and his Jews, at an exorbitant rate of interest; but this was a ruinous system. I appealed, therefore, in the most straightforward manner to my guardian; and having informed him without flinching that "six thousand pounds would scarcely cover liabilities which would acquire a frightful addition by standing over till I came of age," I doubt whether a soldier under punishment ever stood more in need of a bullet to gnaw for the assuagement of his agony, than I while silently clenching my teeth in expectation of the old gentleman's decision on a point so nearly involving my respectability in life.

I renounced all thoughts of the prospects he had held out. I felt that his confidence in my well-doing was gone for ever. My Castles in the Air must either melt into the clouds or become precipitated into the mire. But if my guardian consented to redeem my disparaged credit, I was content.

But the shock he had received from learning the possibility of the presentation of Rainham — the pulpit of which had been graced in alternation by Wrottesleys and Hawleys — being wasted upon a farmer's son of indifferent character, had left his understanding more than usually shaky. After begging me to ring for his own man, he called for a saline draught and proposed to retire to his own room; and before we parted, four-and-twenty hours' deliberation was agreed upon for the consideration of his verdict.

A pleasant four-and-twenty hours they proved to me! In the irritation of my mind, my veins were one minute scorched with fever; the next, my hands seemed to have been plunged in ice. The most excruciating recovery from the stunning effect of Blank Blank's potations, — the worst fit of indigestion after a Trinity lobster salad, all cucumber, olives, and anchovies, — was an

agreeable sensation compared with my present flutter of mind and body; especially after learning that an express had been dispatched to Wakefield for the attendance of the close-fisted Gripham.

How I shuddered on perceiving his horrible buggy drive up to the Hall door, and a blue bag taken out from the chaise seat! Had he been Sir Astley Cooper coming to amputate my leg, and had the blue bag contained the instruments for the operation, I could not have felt more heart-sick!—

As yet, I had seen my guardian only in his indulgent moods; and could no more opine what he might become if exasperated, than one who has studied marine views in summer time in the Bay of Naples, can conjecture the aspect of a typhoón. And when after wasting a sleepless night in picturing to myself the most ferocious phases in which guardian-nature can demonstrate itself, I entered his dressing-room at the appointed time and saw the table covered with papers and parchments, and Gripham in attendance on his principal like a hangman's assistant, my heart contracted till it could have been little larger than a wren's!—

"Sit down!" said Sir Robert, pointing to a chair placed ready for me, as for a patient at a dentist's; and on seeing me hesitate, as if beseeching a reprieve, he added, "for we have accounts of some length to go through."

Though he spoke in a tolerably firm voice, I discovered a scent of ether in the room; as though, poor old fellow, he had required that stimulus to enable him to go through a scene so unpleasant.

"At the request of Sir Robert Hawley, Mr. Wrottesley," said Gripham, whose cue it was to open the proceedings, "I have hastily jotted down, for your instruction, an abstract of the sums expended (errors excepted) on account of the estate of my late revered client, Mr. Francis Wrottesley, since his demise;—partly, Sir, in advances made to yourself, and partly in the administration of the property. Of the former, I find to your account a sum of 12,234*l.* 16*s.* 9*d.* Of the latter—including the *funeral* expenses of the deceased, and the payment of probate-*duty and legacies*, servants' wages, necessary repairs, King's

taxes, and poor's rates, — a sum of 13,480*l.* 7*s.* 4*d.*, the particulars of which expenditure lie on the table before you. Subtract these sums, Mr. Wrottesley, from the gross amount of general receipts of the estate, and you will find a balance of 9,095*l.* remain to the account of the estate, at present invested in the Wakefield bank of Messrs. Sneak, Klose, and Rumblebottom."

I could only bow my assent. The arithmetic of the case was indisputable; or I, at least, felt no disposition to contest it.

"I have furthermore to place before you, Sir," added Gripham, looking fixedly in my face, over his spectacles, "the estimate made by an architect of the highest reputation — Mr. Astragal, of York — of the sums necessary to be expended in substantial and ornamental repairs, in order to place the mansion, known by the name of Wrottesley Hall, in a fitting state for habitation on the attainment of your majority, which, with upholsterers' contracts for the completion of the same, I find to amount in the aggregate to 17,205*l.* odd shillings. Wages, salaries, taxes, and other incidental expenses of the year still to elapse before the completion of your majority, will raise this sum to 23,240*l.*; to meet which, Sir, we shall have in hand — adding the balance now established, and the rents still to be received — the sum of 27,095*l.*; leaving — without taking into account taxes, wages, and unforeseen expenses to be deducted — a balance in your favour, on the attainment of your majority — under the name of savings — of 3,850*l.*; without reference to my own account (for self and partners), and unforeseen casualties of various kinds."

Again I bowed; but, on the strength of so dispiriting an announcement, less deferentially than before.

"I learn, however, from Sir Robert Hawley," added Gripham, gathering firmness of voice and maglignity of eye as he approached the head and front of my offending, "that you are in immediate want of a sum of between six and seven thousand pounds; which, with the allowance to be made you during the ensuing year, would not only extinguish the balance in question, but leave you debtor to the estate in the amount of 5,500*l.*"

A pleasant prospect! And to such a manifesto I had only to bow, once more, my patient submission.

"For this sum, Mr. Wrottesley," resumed the attorney, encouraged by my stultified silence, "your most excellent and indulgent guardian is willing to make himself accountable. But on certain conditions."

I did not again content myself with a formal inclination of the head; but seizing the hand of Sir Robert Hawley, pressed it to my lips. I knew that conditions of *his* proposing could not be otherwise than honourable.

"Your guardian is strongly desirous," resumed the attorney, as if unobservant of my start, "that you should break through, at once, certain injudicious connections you have formed, at college and elsewhere; to which end, he advises that you should instantly quit the country. With attendants of your own choice (subject to his approval), he trusts you will visit the continent; and — since the completion of your education has been rendered impossible by your own imprudence — devote to study the valuable year of leisure remaining to you previous to your entrance into life; partly in some German university or Italian college; partly (for the acquirement of the French language) in Paris."

Having been initiated at some length by the Honourable Blank Blank (of Guards and Hussar experience), into the variety of agreeable facilities awaiting the aspiring linguist on the banks of the Seine, I saw nothing much to complain of in this clause of Sir Robert's conditions.

"We have further to require," added Gripham (gradually progressing, by means of the regal pronoun, towards the "*ego et rex meus*" constituting his inward sense of the relative position of executor and attorney to the Wrottesley estates,) "we have further to require, Sir, that, previous to the attainment of your majority, you enter into no further engagements respecting the disposal of your Church preferment; and that, should the living of Rainham fall in during the interim, you will do nothing *without* previous communication with Sir Robert."

This stipulation was somewhat humiliating to my conse-

quence; but how was I to resist any item of conditions so moderate? Even had the irritation produced by Gripham's dictatorial tone and hinted reprobation extended my resentments to my kind guardian, a thousand unwelcome images of Cambridge duns and London claimants would have risen in judgment before me, to bid me accept, and be thankful. — And I accepted, though less thankfully than they expected.

"I am in no position, Mr. Gripham," said I, with more than my wonted *hauteur*, "to resent being conditioned with, like a child, by those to whom I am forced to place myself under obligation. But I trust you will believe, dear Sir," I continued, turning with more amenity towards my mild old friend, "that there needed only the expression of your opinion on so important a point as Church patronage, to determine mine, so far as it is unshackled by engagements. It grieves me, however, to find so sacred a responsibility as you have referred to, involved in a miserable question of the discharge of my boyish debts."

Sir Robert, in whose heart every honourable sentiment found a ready echo, listened with a heightened colour and an approving eye; and was evidently about to relieve me from the last-imposed restraint, when he was checked by a glance from the attorney.

"The request which you call a condition, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Gripham, "would have been made, under recent circumstances, even without your application for pecuniary assistance."

More and more disgusted by the prominent part taken by Gripham, or rather the prominent part tacitly assigned him by Sir Robert, I rose from my seat to put an end to the conference.

"It is therefore understood, Sir," said I, again pointedly addressing Sir Robert, as if the attorney's last observation had been spoken to the winds, "that I submit to the terms imposed upon me, on condition of being placed in immediate possession of seven of the nine thousand and odd pounds accumulated in the hands of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose."

"In the Wakefield bank," interposed the attorney.

"In which it appears that two of your partners are con-

cerned," said I, firmly; "leaving the future repairs or improvements of Wrottesley Hall wholly unattempted, till the attainment of my majority; when I shall have made up my mind concerning the expenditure I wish to be made."

Gripham looked sheepish enough; for it was his purpose to make a job of the improvements, which Sir Robert was too great an invalid to supervise. But even the old gentleman himself was startled by what he understood as an intimation of non-residence at the Hall. Had I intended to reside there, I must, he thought, have been thankful to find it in perfect order to receive me on coming of age; especially as the funds for its completion were to be chiefly of his own providing.

"On that head, Harry," said he, gravely, — perceiving, with gentlemanly tact, that I scorned to make unreserved confession in presence of Gripham, — "let us have a little further talk together, previous to your departure for the continent. Time will be wanted for a prudent adjustment of your college liabilities; and to leave England for a year's absence, will require a month's preparation."

"A fortnight Sir, or less, will suffice," said I cheerfully, though with difficulty repelling a painful swelling in my throat, as I advanced to shake hands with the old man.

"Why, you are not going to leave me to-day?" he exclaimed, thrown off his guard by the movement. "I have still much to say to you. — Surely you are not going to leave me to-day?"

"With your permission, Sir, I shall be glad to get back to Wrottesley. I do not feel well. Having been lately much harassed, I shall be glad of a few days' quiet, secure from business or intrusion."

This last inuendo was aimed at Gripham; who, I was determined, should not violate the privileges of my hearthstone.

Nor was my avowal of indisposition a mere pretext. The tremors I had experienced the preceding night, were symptomatic: the emotions of the past week having accelerated to a crisis a fever lurking in my veins, produced by the excesses of

the last two years. While still shaking hands with Sir Robert, so deadly a faintness came over me, that I was forced to resume my seat.

"Admit, my dear Harry, that it is impossible for you to leave the Chase in this condition?" faltered the anxious old gentleman.

"On the contrary, my dear Sir," said I, rallying my strength to the best of my power, "I must hasten home, lest I should become too ill for removal. Nicholls, who has known my constitution from infancy, and nursed me through several serious attacks, will be my best doctor."

Allowing him no leisure to remonstrate, I left the room, and was soon on my road. I had some difficulty, however, in sitting my horse. The road seemed to rock under our feet. The landscape grew indistinct to my eyes, escaping me now and then, like objects contemplated at sea during the tossing of a vessel. But that my sure-footed beast was at that moment master of his master, I should scarcely have reached the Hall in safety. As it was, on setting foot on the staircase, to hurry to my own room, I lapsed into a state of total insensibility.

Nothing further of my illness can I bring distinctly to mind, till I woke in a chamber pungently scented with aromatic vinegar; through the obscurity of which I dimly discerned a female figure, seated at some distance from my couch! —

CHAPTER XV.

Quæcunque dixit, si placuerint, dictavit auditor.

Gentle reader, are your sensibilities a little excited? — But for the hope of hurrying your hand as you turned the leaf of a new chapter, I should have called my "couch" a "bed," — a simple four-post bed, the most prosaic of great British antediluvianisms; and honestly admitted that the female musing or dozing in my arm-chair, was no other than my sister Emily.

Poor Nicholls, terrified out of his few remaining senses by my sudden seizure, had sent for spiritual as well as medical ad-

vice; and the firs act of Dr. Temple — on finding the penitent, to whose bed-side he was summoned, in a state of stupor, — was to dispatch an express for my family.

Emily came at once. My mother (who was slowly recovering from one of her now periodical attacks of rheumatic gout) made her appearance, with Dora, two days afterwards; and though I should have placed a veto on their being sent for, let me thankfully acknowledge that their coming proved my salvation. Not that they were better nurses than the old housekeeper; or that the stir in my room, caused by their occasional hysterics, was of particular service. But on perceiving how ruefully the country doctors shook their heads after the second consultation, they, who regarded my life as worth eighteen thousand per annum and had no Yorkshire prejudices to propitiate, insisted on advice from town.

"What signified two or three hundred guineas, when my existence was at stake!"

Dr. Temple wisely replied, that time rather than money was the thing to be economized; and, at his suggestion, an eminent physician was sent for from Edinburgh, who caused my head to be immersed in ice, while my corpse-like body was enveloped in sheets saturated with brandy, so as to stimulate the circulation of the blood without aggravating the cerebral irritation.

This bold innovation, which sent poor Nicholls to his paternoster and set the country doctors' wigs on end, produced the most salutary effect; and it was a day or two after the adoption of the new system, that I became conscious of the presence of my sister.

That struggling back from the brink of the grave, is a fearful and a painful strife! It is so long before one becomes certain — if, indeed, at all, — which of the impressions imbibed during our restless hours of torment were the result of delirium, and which were real. The foretaste of a disembodied state, — the visions of supreme bliss or terrors of penal judgment, which flutter round the pillow of sickness, — either foreshowings sent *in warning* by the Almighty, or emanations of a morbid state of *body, — are only the* more puzzling to the soul, for the debility

into which it is betrayed by the frailty of the flesh linked to its immortal aspirings.

At the close of the three weeks usually assigned as the term of such a fever as mine, I could scarcely make out whether the maimed and bleeding Nancy Nixon who had haunted my bedside, or the pale and resentful Andrew by whom my proffered hand had been constantly rejected, were forms as substantial as those of the kind parent and anxious sisters, who relieved each other as watchers in my sick-room; or whether Dora, Emily, and their weeping mother were but the coinage of my brain, like the other wandering forms which beset my hour of danger.

By the time my poor old guardian was allowed to visit me, however, I was completely myself. And though, thanks to my flowered dressing-gown, tremulous hand, and chicken broth, I seemed to have changed places with him, to my shame be it spoken, that the tears trembling down his wan cheeks were a stronger indication of sensibility than, sick or well, had ever been manifested on mine.

I will not dwell on the tediousness of my convalescence; — though I got well as quickly as I could, not only from impatience of a sick-room and its restraints, but because it made me sadly nervous to know that councils, colloquies, and comparing of notes were going on betwixt my mother and sisters on one side, and Sir Robert and Gripham on the other; to say nothing of Dr. Temple's admission into the general confidence. One hates to be talked over and discussed, with an air of superiority, as though in a strait waistcoat or one's coffin — I might as well have been dead at once, as so thoroughly on the shelf.

When my strength returned sufficiently to admit of conversation, I was careful to afford no new data for their conjectures concerning the origin of my illness; or what I should have done had the state of my mind, during my danger, admitted of my executing testamentary dispositions. But the first time I felt myself alone with Nicholls, I could not refrain from asking him concerning the inquiries after my welfare.

"Had the Roxboroughs sent?"

The old man remained so stupidly unconscious, that I had to

reiterate my question till my mind misgave me concerning the reality of his deafness.

"Be so good as to answer me, Nicholls," said I gravely; "have Sir Gratian Roxborough and his family inquired after me during my illness?"

"In course they have, Sir. Every soul in the neighbourhood was sending."

"And the Roxboroughs among the rest, Nicholls?"

"Most days, Master Harry. At first, twice a day."

"And why was I never told of it?"

"You were too ill to be troubled."

"But yesterday — when you brought me Lord Meadowley's card, and a message from Mr. Courtfield, of Courtfield?"

"I was desired, Sir, to say nothing about any message from Roxborough Elms."

"And by whom, pray?"

"By Sir Robert Hawley, Sir."

I was about to explode into angry vituperation. Luckily, before the word "officious old fool" could pass my lips, my compunctious memory recalled the fatherly services I had so gratuitously received at his hands.

"But what could possibly make Sir Robert desire, Nicholls," said I, "to keep me ignorant of the kindness of my friends?"

"Because, Mister Harry — I hope, Sir, you won't get me into trouble with Sir Robert and the ladies for having told you the truth — because there was a great dispute, such time as you was at your worst, between Lawyer Gripham and Sir Gratian" —

"About me?"

"About the old gentleman's insisting on being admitted to your sick-room; which Mr. Gripham wouldn't by no means hear of."

"And for once he was right!" said I, reflecting upon the annoyances that might have arisen had Sir Gratian Roxborough been an auditor of my frenzied ravings while my pillow was beset by the imaginary forms of his daughters and Henry Temple, and I kept adjuring the latter to resign Caroline to my embraces and *take in exchange the* living of Rainham, the Archbishopric of

York, the kingdom of England itself, — all that a disordered brain could pretend to dispose of.

Now however that, like Richard, I was myself again, — though a sorry self it was, — I determined that my first rational act should be to signify my gratitude to the Roxboroughs; and having ascertained from Nicholls that the hour at which my good guardian's quizzical chariot and long-tailed horses drew up under my portico for his daily visit, (of the hour set apart for which, nearly a quarter was required for his ascending the staircase, and as much for the return, breathing his asthma in an arm-chair at every landing,) — was twelve of the clock, I dispatched my groom to the Elms, thanking the old gentleman for his attentions, and begging him to call on me about two o'clock the first disengaged afternoon.

Next morning, when Sir Robert took his usual leave by enjoining me to be sparing in my diet and unsparing in my doses of quinine till he saw me again, I fancied myself free for the day: when lo! my poor mother saw fit to instal herself in the place he left vacant; and began to enlarge, for the first time since her arrival, upon the pomps and vanities of Wrottesley Hall. "A little town!" she called it, "which nothing but a gas-contractor could ever light up into cheerfulness."

"As to draughts and chills," she said, "nothing less than two Angola shawls, three Welsh whittles, and the two boas of my two sisters superadded to her own, had preserved her from such an attack of the rheumatism as would have conveyed her straight from the family mansion of the Wrottesleys to their *domus ultima*."

It was scarcely necessary to quote in reply an item I had noticed in Gripham's abstract of the needful improvements done under my roof, of a hundred pounds or so to the Dowsons of stove immortality, for a patent apparatus for warming the house.

"You must have found yourself sadly uncomfortable, my dear boy," resumed the maternal voice, which even in my sick-room, with the thermometer at seventy, issued from a mountain of wraps — "on first arriving here from poor snug little Hentsfield. A clue or guide must have been wanting to enable you to

find your way in your own house! Why, the cavalry barracks at Bristol did not occupy a wider ground-plan; and Dora, who has the eye of a tax-gatherer, declares that there are half as many windows again, as in the frontage of Ashridge!"

"The façade is some feet longer than the celebrated one at Kedleston," said I, far from insensible to any tribute of applause offered to my *palazzo*.

"But the grander it is, my dear Harry," resumed my mother, "the more I am surprised you should ever have thought of settling here alone! — Such a wilderness as it is! — Such desolation! — I 'm sure I don't wonder the chilliness of the house should have given you the typhus fever."

"My disorder was the fen fever, mother, of which I brought the seeds with me from college. At Cambridge, indeed, I was seldom or ever well."

In addressing one's mother, it was needless to add, "as seldom as Johnson and Justerini's maraschino, or the Honourable Blank Blank's lime-punch, allowed me to rise without a head-ache."

"In that case, Harry," resumed the mountain of shawls, "I am sincerely glad you have made up your mind to have done with college. For my part, I cannot understand the use of degrees, except to parsons or physicians. The poor dear Colonel, your father, was never at college at all. But was he the worse soldier or gentleman for *that?*" —

Rejoiced to see her reconcile herself so easily to the disaster she so little comprehended, I thought the moment a good one to explain that, if I accompanied her back to Hentsfield according to her desire for change of air, it would only be on my way to the continent; where I intended to await my coming of age. But what was my surprise when, instead of bursting into remonstrances, she treated the affair as a joke.

"Ay, ay!" said she. "We all know what vagaries sick people are apt to indulge in. As you lie there in your dressing-gown, I dare say it is amusing enough to plan voyages and travels. But when you get to Hentsfield you will sing a different *song. It will be hard*, indeed, if you cannot pick out from

among our four pretty neighbours at Crowsden Grange a companion for life who would render even Wrottesley Hall more habitable."

So, then! this was the plot against my peace! Not a little amused by the old lady's *naïveté* in affording me timely warning, I could not refrain from a few inquiries concerning the fair foe lying in ambush against my arrival in Hertfordshire; in reply to which, too eager to be very distinct, my mother contrived to group the family in such inextricable entanglement, that it was only by a strong effort of mind I was enabled to detach before my mind's eye Miss Stormont, — full-blown and dignified "a very superior young woman;" Ellen, dark and romantic as a Dona peeping from behind the jalousies of some balcony in Seville; Louisa, a gentle elegiac beauty, all whispers and tears; and last and least, Rose, — the spoiled child of the family, — concerning whom even my mother shook her head, as though it were painful to think what might be the result of her girlish indiscretions.

In the wide field thus afforded to my choice, there was something piquant and exciting enough to make me almost regret I had not an idle month to waste at Hentsfield, in the pleasant pastime of being fallen in love with; especially as my mother, with her usual candour or simplicity, betrayed the established opinion of her fireside, — that should one of the four quarters of Crowsden Grange ever become Mrs. Wrottesley Wrottesley, Dora would recover her chance of becoming the future Lady Stormont.

"You see, my dear Harry," said she, drawing her chair nearer my sofa for a confidential whisper, "the greater part of Sir Thomas's property goes to his daughters. Crowsden and the title alone are entailed on his nephew; and were the girls substantially settled in life, the old Baronet's pride would urge him to do something for the future representative of his name, to enable him to perpetuate the family honours."

"Likely enough!" was my rejoinder. "But why not remove a quarter of the difficulty by uniting him with one of his cardinal virtues?"

"The young ladies may have other inclinations. In these days, young folks enjoy the privilege of choosing for themselves,

and from the moment Reginald Stormont became acquainted with your sister Dora, I can assure you that—"

What she could assure me, the fates denied me to learn; for at that moment the said sister, as if magnetically apprised that we were discussing her prospects matrimonial, hurried with a flushed air into the room.

"There is the strangest old man in the drawing-room," cried she, "who declares, my dear Harry, that he has an appointment with you."

"One of the physicians!" observed my mother, as oracularly as if not infallibly fallacious in her guesses.

"Oh! no — not a physician. He looks and talks much more like the tipsy gardener in the Barber of Seville!"

"Ring, and desire Nicholls to show him up," said I; in this slight sketch, recognising Sir Gratian.

But there needed no showing up. Old Roxborough had followed close at my sister's heels; and now clattered towards me, and embraced me with a sort of blubbering affection which appeared to the mincing gentility of my Hertfordshire relations almost as vulgar as his north country wrap-rascal and leather gaiters.

"Never expected to see you again, my boy! Was afraid 't was all up with Cock Robin!" cried the old man, wiping in succession his eyes, his red nose, and his bald head with the same thin worn Bandana. "Always said that Cambridge would knock you up, — always said 't would knock you up! Those confounded crabbed mathematics are enough to soften the core of a crooked billet!" —

"Your family I hope are well, Sir Gratian?" said I, with undisguised interest; but withdrawing my hand, now none of the stoutest, from his rough hugging.

"*Well?* Ay! *They 're* well enough. They 're *always* well, — unless, now and then, poor Car when she gets a fit of the no-hows! But I can tell you that Ad'la, flighty as she seems, was half beside herself when the report of your illness reached us. *The Archdeacon* brought us the bad news one day at dinner, a'ter *calling at* Hawley Chase. And nothing would serve the girls,

though 't was sleeting arrow-heads and Whitechapel needles, but I must on with my great coat, and ride over to the Hall, forsooth, to see what was going on! Not that I made much bones about it; for I know how a helper's answer to a message can be trusted, after a second glass of table ale! How'sever, helper or groom, or head coachman, or what not, might ha' brought back as good comfort as *I* did: — that you were lying on your back, as white as your sheets and senseless as your bolster, with all the doctors in the county gathering about you, like crows upon a carrion."

My mother and sister — and now, perhaps with some reason — looked ineffably disgusted.

"And I can tell you, my dear Wrottesley," continued the old man, taking no more heed of their presence than of that of the bed-curtains — for my conduct had done little to inspire the neighbours with deference towards my family — "I can tell you that when I got home again, and blurted out the state of the case, poor Car got as pale as a ghost, and trembled in every limb; while Ad'la, half out of her wits, kept wondering half a dozen times in a minute — *who* was the next heir to the Wrottesley estates!"

"Ay, next heir to the advowson of Rainham!" was my secret rejoinder. "But I shall live to disappoint them yet!"

"As to Charley," continued Sir Gratian, "not content with making us write to town every morning, to say how you were going on, he must needs have a line of an a'ternoon by the 'High-flyer' coach."

No wonder! — His father little knew how many thousands of pounds my premature decease would have left him minus!

"No good, h'wever, dwelling on what 's past!" resumed the old gentleman, again attempting to shake my hand. "We 've distanced the undertakers this time, and that 's all that matters. You 've cut college, I find, eh? or college has cut you, — which comes to pretty near the same; and I warrant, after the shake you 've had, you 'll sow your wild oats, and settle at the Hall for good and all. Who knows but before hunting 's over, we shall have you at last in the saddle!"

"A little out in your reckoning, my dear Sir Gratian!" said I, bitterly mortified by all he had let fall. "At the very moment you made your appearance, I was on the point of offering Wrottesley Hall as a residence to my mother and sisters. For a twelvemonth and a day to come, I shall see what health and wisdom I can pick up on the continent."

"Why zounds! you 're not going to let yourself be plucked by the Mounseers?" cried Sir Gratian, who piqued himself upon being what he called "English to the back-bone." "A pretty look-out for Charley!" added he, after a moment's consideration. "Charley had set his heart on your spending some time with him in town!"

Charley Roxborough's "heart" was a thing indefinite as the longitude. Nevertheless I expressed becoming gratitude; and began to inquire so circumstantially after his amusements and pursuits, that my mother and sisters discreetly withdrew, eager perhaps for a family discussion of the prospects I had incidentally unfolded; and no sooner did I find myself alone with Sir Gratian, than I managed to extract from him that innumerable notes had passed during my illness between the Elms and the Rectory.

"Since that plaguy disagreeable piece of business with Temple's brother," added the old gentleman in a confidential tone, "I had docked all intimacy, you know, betwixt my girls and the parson. But as Ad'la assured me she wrote only to obtain news of you — knowing that the Doctor 'd been called for at the Hall. — I even let matters take their course."

And thus, the Rector of my parish and the girl at whose feet I would fain have laid my fortune and my heart, had probably been settling together from whom, the moment my eyes were closed, they should endeavour to extract a promise of the next presentation to Rainham!

That evening — when boozing, in domestic confidence, with my family over my barley-water, — it was amusing to observe the round-about approaches by which my mother neared the subject of the residence at Wrottesley to which I had adverted. Not, *as the reader may conjecture,* moved by desire to take possession

of the great house; but trying to find out how I should be least affronted by their determination to decline the proferred honour.

"Nothing can be kinder on your part, Harry," said my mother, "than the wish I heard you express to your eccentric old guest, that we should reside here during your absence. But I hope you won't take it amiss, my dear boy, if I say that, with all the grandeur of Wrottesley Hall, Hentsfield is twice as pleasant. A great rambling place like this, requires a whole regiment of servants to make it tolerably comfortable."

"Comfortable!" ejaculated Dora, glancing towards a gloomy grove of pine-trees, the only green thing — and that verging on sable — visible from my windows. For she was too thoughtless to consider that, even at Hentsfield, her bright flower-plots of geraniums, fuchsias, and salvias were at that season of the year in eclipse, and her shrubberies as leafless as my own. "Comfortable? You must have been married half a dozen years, Harry, and added as many olive branches to your fireside, before such a house as this could feel inhabited! Not a brick in the conservatory holds together, and the gardens are as naked as Leicester Fields!"

"As to neighbourhood," added her sister, "if we are to take the old monster to whom you were so civil this morning as a specimen, I would as soon settle in New Zealand as among such people! Consider, my dear Harry, the difference between this and Hentsfield, where we have Panshanger, Hatfield, Gorhambury, Brocket, Tittenhanger within visiting distance!"

"They were quite as much within visiting distance," was the mental reflection of her dear Harry, "at the time you thought me a monster for not transporting hither my whole family, house, and household, as in a fairy tale, and settling them in my park!" But I contented myself with replying aloud, that distances were not measured in Yorkshire as in the counties adjoining the metropolis; that some of those I considered my neighbours lived forty miles off — others at a still greater distance; and that we visited each other, like the patriarchs of old, with our flocks and herds, our slaves and our camels, — that is, with our hunters, grooms, waiting-maids, and *valets de chambre*, — to say nothing of pointers, setters, and lap-dogs.

"I dare say it is a proof of wretched taste," said Emily, with a scarcely disguised yearning towards Crowsden Grange; "but I must say that the snug habits of Hentsfield, and the cozy sociability of our neighbourhood, appear to me twice as agreeable as this seven-leagued boot sort of hospitality."

I had no inclination to dispute the point. Even I — Wrottesley Wrottesley of that ilk — was just then sadly out of charity with my Yorkshire neighbours. To think that Caroline Roxborough, with that seraphic face of hers, should be capable of inquiring, ere the breath was out of my body, who was the next patron of Rainham! —

To prove to my family, meanwhile, that I was not touchy with them for refusing what I had never offered till experience taught me how little it was worth acceptance, I complied with their entreaties that we should all travel together to the South; and even promised to spend a few days with them at Hentsfield, while ropes were being adjusted to my travelling carriage, and a courier added to my *état major*.

From that moment, the girls took care that quinine should not be wanting, in order to expedite my convalescence. Every morning, they hastened to inform me that I looked wonderfully better than the preceding night; and when poor old Nicholls, on seeing me resume my usual attire, declared with uplifted hands and tears in his eyes that I was wasted to a shadow, Emily pettishly retorted, "that it was very unkind of him to say so. But that he was known of old for a croaker!"

"At all events," added Dora, "pray remember, Harry, what an appetite you used to have at Hentsfield! Once there, you will grow as rosy as your friend, Sir Gratian!"

Having made up my mind to go, I offered no opposition to their theories; and all was in train for our speedy departure, when lo! one morning as the girls hurried into my room from a winter trudge in the shrubberies, — their woollen shawls steaming with hoar-frost, and their clumsy clogs still adhering to their boots, — they found a stranger seated by my fireside, differing as widely from either my guardian or Sir Gratian, as — to use *a favourite simile of the latter* — a pine-apple from a pippin.

Had you ever occasion to admire, good reader, at a theatrical rehearsal, the art with which a good stage-manager (such as one of the Farrens) disengages, one by one, the lumbering shapeless group of silk and broadcloth heaped in the middle of the stage; and, by placing the *dramatis personæ* at their proper distances, assigns meaning to their actions and intelligence to their words? Such was the influence exercised by Charles Roxborough at Wrottesley Hall, within ten minutes of his arrival! Every body and every thing had changed its relative position. My sisters addressed me with deference when they saw the finest of fine gentlemen, my bosom friend, and heard him declare that he had given up the last shooting-party of the season at Oatlands, to hasten down into Yorkshire for the pleasure of a day spent in my company.

In my turn, I thought more of my sisters on perceiving that, so far from disparaging them as country dowdies, Charles Roxborough addressed them with far greater respect than he was in the habit of conceding to the fairest of the Yorkshire belles.

It is true, the consequences of typhus fever are sometimes as fatal as the malady itself; and in case of my death, unmarried and intestate, my mother was naturally my heir, and her daughters would become co-heiresses. But in all the honesty of its twenty years, the heart is incapable of so cold-blooded an estimate of people's conduct and motives. Charles Roxborough was then the type of gentlemanliness in my eyes. Uncorrupted by the vileness of the world, I did not preconceive corruption. How frightful it is, by the way, to meet, in maturer years, a parson one has known as young and pure of soul as Wrottesley Wrottesley in his teens, — transformed into a double-dealing worldling, encrusted with duplicity and vice! A lovely face disfigured by the small-pox is not more painful to contemplate. The human mind may be pitted quite as hideously as the body! —

But to return to Charley. It was diverting enough to see the two girls, so apt to lay down the law to my inexperience in matters of etiquette and the graces of life, suddenly struck dumb and timid by the presence of one from whom the king of exquisitism was supposed to take lessons. Vulgar perforce, of hyper-re-

finement, they talked like the Précieuses Ridicules, and were affected as the very devil. But Charley, who was only come to ascertain in case of a relapse what testamentary dispositions I had made for the payment of my debts, had no fault to find with them; except when they chose to stay and do the honours of the luncheon table, when he "wanted to be alone with his friend."

How they talked about him when he was gone! That is, how each pretended to criticise him, lest the other should perceive how much she was captivated by the graceful, polished ease which never raised its voice or hurried its movements; which said so little, but that little ever so *à propos;* and which, so far from indulging in the coarse quizzing just then the order of the day, expressed its sense of fastidiousness by a pitying smile, and silent avoidance of the persons or things by others vociferously decried.

I had, of course, begged him to stay dinner. But Charley, who was little in the habit of exposing his comfort to the contingencies of so unsettled an establishment as mine, pretending a promise to his father, looked at his watch, and was off. Next day, however, he returned uninvited; accompanied by his sister Adela, whom he had evidently dragooned into doing the honours of the county to my mother and sisters.

Too indignant, however, against Roxborough Elms to promote any further intimacy, I cut short the engagements proposed, by announcing that, being now well enough to travel, our journey was fixed for the morrow.

On the morrow therefore we started; but such was my weakness, that we were forced to make three days of it between Wrottesley and Hentsfield; and amid the dingy dreariness of an inn evening (in which nothing but a hippopotamus, like Dr. Johnson, could surely ever have found delight), I had the satisfaction of hearing Dora remark to Emily, or Emily to Dora, that "it would be most unfair were they to abuse Yorkshire; having seen it under circumstances so painful, and at a season so peculiarly disadvantageous."

There was no end to their recantations.

"*One must admit,*" whispered my elder sister, "that if Sir

Gratian Roxborough be a boor, the rest of the family are charming."

"And I confess," retorted the younger, "that I should not have been sorry to have had a little peep at Roxborough Elms."

I would not have given much for young Stormont's chance, even backed by the entail of Crowsden Grange, had he returned to his allegiance while the grave smile and graceful bow of Charles Roxborough still exercised their charm! —

CHAPTER XVI.

She was not beautiful, they said:
I felt that she was *more;*
One of those women women dread,—
Men, fatally adore. MRS. TORRE HOLME.

Her speech is nothing:
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts.
SHAKSPEARE.

If I submitted at Wrottesley to be a trifle sister-ridden, it was partly from the feebleness of indisposition, — partly because my family were guests in my house; and, more than all, because I was far less desirous of a *tête-à-tête* with either Charley or his father, than they with me.

But at Hentsfield, my sense of independence returned; and I made it so clearly apparent that the length and frequency of my future visits would depend on my enjoying the uninvadable privacy of my own room, unsummoned to visitors, unmolested by visits, that I was allowed to pursue my reveries in the old chamber, — no longer, alas! either green or dimitied, — as uninterruptedly as in the days when I was a lout in whose purse the largest coin of the realm was a dollar.

If popular prejudice can be credited, young people are apt to grow during illness. That they effect a preternatural mental progress, I am convinced. With what different eyes, for instance, did I contemplate Hentsfield and its inhabitants *now* and at my last visit! Either *I* was wonderfully changed, or every thing around me.

In that room where, sleeping or waking, I had dreamed so many dreams, — in that room where, as a youngster, I had constructed Castles in the Air, such as might have put Aladdin's to shame, — it was impossible not to indulge in a little philosophy. If, in the prosaic insignificance of my boyish days, I had framed such poetic visions, — establishing myself now as a solitary misanthrope at Venice, to ponder away my life among blue canals and mouldering palaces; or as a hermit, amid the vineyards and olive-gardens of the Conca d'Oro; sometimes as a plumed and tattooed chief, among the Micmacs of the Back-woods, or as a missionary to the dusky tribes of Ind, or Hakim, dispensing health and civilization to the fever-struck Kraals of Africa; or, like little Jack in the story-book, as a Tàtar Khan, with a stud of thousands of horses, or, with a pilgrim's staff in hand, a wanderer among the ruined cities of Mexico, and the Assyrian wilds, — these vain imaginings had not melted more completely into air, than the more substantial projects of my adolescence.

My first chimera, after attaining a position in life nearly as miraculous as any of the strange adventures I had chalked out for myself, was to secure an independence to Andrew Grove, such as would enable the disinterested friend of my boyhood to pursue his studies like a gentleman, and perhaps eventually attain the highest dignities of the Church. And *him*, in the wantonness of my heart, I had converted into a ruined and broken-hearted man!

My second castle, constructed for my own glorification, had been as little respected as the first. The public honours which were to form a stepping-stone to my political ambitions, and establish me as a county member, the representative of the united estates of Wrottesley Hall and Hawley Chase, and an aspirant to a peerage, — had been sacrificed by the same contemptible act of folly which rendered my embryo Bishop Heber an outcast!

My projects, both sage and silly, had been equally evanescent; and my follies far greater than announced by the accusation of *Gripham.* Instead of having simply squandered the savings of *my minority, so as to leave* the improvements of Wrottesley

problematical, Charles Roxborough and his Jews could testify that nearly two years' income was anticipated! Such, in short, would be my embarrassments on coming of age, that the seat in Parliament once coveted by my patriotism, was likely to become available to me as a spendthrift! —

Could I do otherwise than shudder, as I reflected on all this! For what had I to show for my wastings? I had done little enough for my family, — little enough for my credit. I had eaten my apples green, my venison lean; had quaffed unripe wine, and mounted my colts unbroken. Like every other ruined heir, from the days of Timon of Athens to those of the Golden Ball, I had been victimized by scorners who called themselves my friends, and made only disreputable acquaintance.

As I stood gazing out of the self-same window on the self-same landscape which produced my first fit of rumination, I could not help cursing in my heart the influence of routine in this worldly world of ours, which reduces the asses tramping in its wheel to the same wretched subservience. Though conceiving myself a mighty genius and reserved for great things, had I not myself been guilty of all the vulgar littlenesses which make pygmies of the most aspiring of mankind!

The reader may chance to recollect, that from my original reverie in the green chamber, I was summoned to take possession of eighteen thousand a-year. On the present occasion, I was merely disturbed by the rumbling up to the door of the old family coach of all the Stormonts. According to my conventions with my mother, no one ventured to apprise me of the visit; and yet, moved by the innate perversity of contrarious human nature, I felt affronted at not being summoned. I was awaiting the return of a messenger I had despatched to Wilsbury with a letter addressed to poor dear Andrew, containing a five hundred pound note (part of the travelling money supplied by Gripham), to pay off his modest Peter House expenses. And yet anxious as I was to hear that he bore me no deadly enmity for having, in mere inconsideration, blighted his prospects for life, I was idiot enough to feel mortified at not being summoned to flirt with the four Miss Stormonts!

"No doubt," thought I, "they are cross-questioning my sisters concerning this renowned Yorkshire seat of mine, and all its appurtenances; and Dora and Emily (the jades!) are telling them I have got *pour tout potage* by way of neighbours, a crack-brained sottish old Baronet, whose daughters have sent me to Coventry, and whose son is endeavouring to send me to the King's Bench. But I will be beforehand with them, and throw myself like a hand-grenade into the enemy's camp."

Having thrust my arms into one of Stultz's most unimpeachable morning coats, and passed through my hair one of Delcroix's ivory brushes saturated with Vegetable Extract, I hurried down accordingly, without a glimpse at the glass. But though that cruel teller of home-truths might have apprized me, that a sickly young man of twenty, infirm of gait and gamboged in complexion, is nearly as unsightly an object as a limp-haired boy in outgrown nankeens, two or three courtships of which I had been the object at Cambridge and in Yorkshire, convinced me that all the beauty of my park and picture gallery was permanent in my face; and that a man possesses in his rent-roll the true cestus of Venus.

I scarcely know what degree of elasticity I could have attributed to a family coach; for I certainly entered the drawing-room prepared to find four Miss Stormonts smiling at me from the four points of the compass. Instead of which, I was hastily presented to a remarkably lady-like old woman, the mother of my Maccabees; and a peach-faced Dudù-looking damsel of six-and-twenty, in whom I readily recognized Miss Stormont. There remained only an apish little imp in a pink bonnet, who did not wait to be introduced; but after expressing her surprise that I resembled neither Dora nor Emily, informed me she was "their friend Rose."

"We were all terribly afraid at Crowsden, Mr. Wrottesley," said she, leaving time neither to mother nor sister for formal inquiries after my health, "that you would detain the girls the whole winter in the North. People are so fond of citing Yorkshire hospitality! But I dare say it is all stuff! The truth is, (isn't *it?) that apart from the* manufacturing towns, the county is so

thinly inhabited and the aborigines so stupid, that when they can lay hands on strangers, they don't like to let them go again."

I was rising to explain in the plainest prose that, not having yet taken up my residence in Yorkshire, I was unable to confirm her hypothesis; when the spoiled child, fonder of hearing herself talk than other people, remorselessly interrupted me.

"One is so sure to be disappointed," said she, "in the things one travels to find! There is no cross you know at Banbury, — no cheese at Stilton, — no hams at Bayonne, — no obelisk at Luxor, — no bas-reliefs at the Parthenon! And I dare say, if I could get Dora and Emily to tell the truth, they would own that they had eaten no Yorkshire pie at Wrottesley Hall, nor been much fêted by your neighbours."

"Their object in visiting Wrottesley," said I, meaning to be bitter on her flippancy, "was I believe, to nurse a sick brother. That purpose they very kindly fulfilled."

"Did they? Then I must say you do very little credit to their nursing!" cried Miss Rose, not a whit abashed. "You do not look half so well as I expected to see you."

"You don't take into account, my dear," interrupted my mother, who, lest I should be put out of conceit with the whole Stormont family by this missish specimen, thought it better to interfere, "that Harry is still suffering from the fatigues of his journey."

"I did not, indeed. — But if three days on the road suffice to knock him up, my dear Mrs. Powerscourt," rejoined the wayward girl, "how is he ever to accomplish the Odyssey which Emily has been announcing? My cousin Reginald visited the cataracts in Upper Egypt, and nearly all the monuments of the Holy Land. But *he* has the strength of a lion! — Reginald could find his way to Bombay and back, and be none the worse for it."

"When I return from my tour without having seen all Mr. Stormont has seen, I give you leave to call me a spooney," said I, so much out of temper as to be a little out of taste.

"To call you a *what?*" — inquired Rose, either really or affectedly puzzled.

"To pronounce me an unmanly sluggard," cried I, compelled

to look a little sharper after my phraseology. But Dudù seemed to think I had been sufficiently stung by the little firefly; and dropping her conversation with Dora, began to talk sense to me, which was heavy work after the nonense of her little sister. There is a Roman camp near Wrottesley, concerning which she cross-questioned me a great length, gesticulating all the time with her arms extended *en espalier*, till I fairly wished her buried in its trenches.

"Why bore poor Mr. Wrottesley about the Romans, Mary!" cried the rose-bud, pettishly interrupting her. "According to all accounts, *his* acquaintance lies chiefly among the Greeks!"

And this from the damsel who, a moment before, had pleaded ignorance of a slang expression! Her cousin Reginald, doubtless! O loves and graces — O purity and holiness, at what hour of the morning must one rise to discover a simple feminine nature, where neither brother nor cousin has been beforehand with one in affording a bite of the forbidden apple! — Where, *where* is one to seek those virgin sands, on which, as on Crusoe's island, no savage footprint has been set!

The two mothers, meanwhile, perceiving with matronly tact that their offspring were not tuned precisely to the same pitch, broke in with mutual invitations: — mine, all anxiety that the Stormonts should take a family dinner with us previous to Harry's departure for the continent; Lady Stormont, persisting that the said Harry would derive benefit from change of scene and objects, and insisting that we should dine with *them* the following day.

"If Mr. Wrottesley were afraid of the night air, perhaps he would accept a bed at Crowsden Grange."

I accepted it at once. Partly to annoy my sisters, who looked uneasy at the thought of my obtaining a glimpse behind the tapestry of their lives: partly because, ill at ease with my conscience, I felt that new faces and strange follies might divert me from the contemplation of my own. The idea of four damsels paying their court to me at once, like dancing *odalisques* wooing some old pacha in a ballet, was far from disagreeable. After all, even a judge is allowed, amid the rigours of the bench, to recreate his *senses by holding a posy* in his hand.

To own the truth, moreover, the narrow dimensions of Hentsfield were such as to inspire one with wolfish restlessness. As to pacing any one of its rooms when unquiet in mind, a hop, step, and jump would have carried one right through the window. It was like playing at life to live in such a baby house, after the spacious corridors and noble proportions of Wrottesley. After a single round of the premises, — meadows, orchard, and flower garden, — I could scarcely restrain my wonder at having once regarded them as a domain. The weedy fish-pond seemed to have shrunk into a barber's bason!

But even had I not felt "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" by the contracted limits of a spot which I had never been enabled to invest with the sacredness of home, I should have been pleased with the prospect of a visit to the old Grange. Crowsden was a place that figured largely in pocket-book vignettes, and views of country-seats of the nobility and gentry; and whatever ambitious architect addressed the polite audiences of Royal Institutions, Literary Associations, or provincial Athenæums, on the subject of the domestic architecture of our ancestors, was sure to produce a ground-plan of Crowsden Grange, with a view of the southern or principal front tinted in bistre or sepia, till it looked like the frontispiece of one of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances. Now I had seen to satiety Gothic churches, Gothic castles, and Gothic halls (when shall we see a Gothic theatre, for which the style is so admirably calculated?) But the little sanctuary half hidden at the extremity of an avenue of ancient beeches, like a Beguine's face under her coif, was the very thing to move the stagnancy of my comatose imagination.

I suspect, however, that if invited to a formal dinner-party at half-past six in the Baptistery at Florence, or the Golden Chamber at Augsburg, we should find it look like any other dining-room! Plush and plate are in the ascendant. The aiguillettes of clumsy footmen whisking in one's face, the cod's head and shoulders which the purblind old gentleman of the house *will* carve himself, albeit the fish-slice tremble in his hand like Fleury's lace ruffles vibrating in the gesticulation of a sentimental comedy,—are apt to divert our attention from groined ceilings

or chimney-pieces calculated to put the shame that of the *Franc de Bruges*.

But as Sir Thomas's wine was not quite so well-seasoned as his house, probably because "my cousin Reginald" had drunk out the sherris-sack, and old canary of his ancestors, I entered the withdrawing-room after dinner seeing quite as clearly as before; and by all the saints of the calendar, never was I more disgusted than by the flimsy vulgarity of every object contained within those venerable walls! I now saw where my mother and sisters had imbibed the miserable taste for tawdry furniture which had dressed out my old green room like a chimney-sweeper on May Day! But what was *that* mistake compared with the sacrilege which had covered the tables and *étagères* under the embayed windows (the corbeils of whose groinings grinned horrible a ghastly smile as they surveyed the rubbish) with trumperies in card-board and gilt-paper, Chinese carvings and all the gimcracks of Birmingham *virtù!*

The grand old chimney-piece was hung round with paltry miniatures, like some colossal South Sea idol with shells and humming-birds in its ears. The lanceolated windows had paper transparencies in every pane! —

"You will perceive, Mr. Wrottesley," simpered Lady Stormont majestically from under her turban, "that we have contrived to make the old place look tolerably cheerful!"

Now that the harlequin's bat of fashion has begun to furbish up every Roman villa of Putney or Doric palace of Carlton Gardens with the richly carved moveables of the middle ages, *bahuts* with twisted columns, or ebony cupboards of plate, (with much the same discernment that places a verandah over the portico of an Irish Tusculum,) what sums of money would be paid by some modern decorator for the fine old fretted furniture of walnut wood, which Lady Stormont boasted of having sold to some country broker, as too cumbersome even for the lumber-room of Crowsden, to make way for her trumpery gilt chairs and sofas *à la Louis Quatorze!* I am not much of an antiquarian; but by Jove! it made my blood boil to see a family relic so desecrated *as that remarkable house.* A statue of Erasmus, or Chaucer, or

ancient Gower, dressed out like Monsieur Chicard or Monsieur Tortillard of the Bal Mabille, would scarcely have been more frivolous and vexatious.

As there was a showy upright pianoforte in the room, and a double-gilded double-actioned harp, I had no hope of escaping what is called "a little music;" which purports musical martyrdom lasting through the evening.

"Don't be afraid, Mr. Wrottesley," exclaimed the impish Rose, aside, on perceiving an involuntary spasm contract my face the moment her lady mother suggested to Louisa and Ellen, who constituted the family orchestra, that perhaps the Miss Powerscourts would like to hear the Polonaises sent them from Petersburgh by their cousin Reginald. "I took good care of both harp and piano before dinner, so as to defy even my sisters' skill to make music out of them. It is too seldom one sees a strange face or hears a new voice in this house, to give up the pleasure of chit-chat for what those who care to hear at all, can hear better elsewhere."

In reply to this rattle, I could not but own that I was not partial to chamber music.

"Perhaps you agree with me and my cousin Reginald," cried she, "that music is only pleasant when enjoyed as an accompaniment and not an interruption to conversation; — a military band, for instance, at a *fête champêtre*, or the birds in a wood."

But by this time the fair musicians had discovered themselves to be at fault; though who could have mislaid the harpstring box, or what could be the cause which rendered dumb three notes of their beloved Broadwood, did not suggest itself to their apprehension. Ellen grew flushed and angry, accusing blundering housemaids and meddlesome footmen, while the soft eyed Louisa was almost moved to tears; both being eager that their dearest Dora and Emily should hear the prettiest Polonaises which had ever glided in serpentine measures since the *chef-d'œuvre* of Oginski!

"Since it seems we cannot have any music, my dears," noddled the painstaking old lady of the house, "what say you to a round game?"

A look of blank consternation followed, — as when, in cabinet council, the royal dissent is hinted to some ministerial measure.

"Why not propose *petits jeux* at once, mamma?" cried the privileged Rose. "Remember that poor Mr. Wrottesley is only half recovered from the typhus fever! You might as well sit him down to backgammon with poor papa, as to commerce and nightcaps!"

And mamma, accustomed to understand things by halves, pointed to Sir Thomas, who was dozing in a corner, as a reason why this suggestion could not be complied with.

"I am afraid, my dear Lady Stormont," said my mother, "that, as there is no moon, instead of accepting your pleasant proposal, I must ask leave to ring for my carriage." An intimation not exactly tending to confirm my sisters' assertion, that the sociability of Hertfordshire was a far more neighbourly thing than the patriarchal hospitalities of my new county.

But it was not for me to find fault with an arrangement which left me to the undisturbed contemplation of the four beauties, whom it needed no great stretch of imagination to convert into the representatives of the four quarters of the globe: the mature Miss Stormont figuring America, with her abundant rivers, tremendous mountains, and mines of precious metal; while the indolent Louisa, Circassian in every gesture, might have sat for picture of Asia, and the dark eyed Ellen of the sultry fatherland of the Moor. But little Rose was Europe from top to toe — pretty, witty, wanton, wild; — the acme of civilization, yet having uncultured heaths and valleys in its very heart; — of which it was my business to discover whether they contained the craters of extinct volcanoes, or glaciers frozen from the very creation.

"Your sisters appear to have been much impressed by their visit to the North," observed Miss Stormont, in her usual didactic tone, the moment the carriage drove from the door.

"But for the melancholy occasion of the journey," added Louisa, with an air of pensive sympathy, "they would doubtless have greatly enjoyed their visit."

"But how came it, Mr. Wrottesley," broke in the perverse Rose, "that you never thought of inviting them to your family *mansion till you had one foot* in the family vault?"

"Because I have never been permanently resident at Wrottesley Hall," said I. "It would have been almost insulting to invite an inhabitant of your smooth, trim, snug Hertfordshire, into a wilderness where the gravel walks are overgrown with groundsel, and the marble hall with green mould."

"Our smooth, trim, snug Hertfordshire, the county of citizens' boxes and bankers' villas! — Is not that what you want to express, Mr. Wrottesley?" cried Rose, laughing heartily, though not loud enough to waken the old gentleman snoozing in the corner with all the twitchings and whimperings of a dreamy hound.

"I might certainly venture to say it under this roof," I retorted, assuming a little spirit, "which probably harboured the Stormont family some centuries before the foundation-stone was laid of Wrottesley Hall."

"But we are all dying to know," resumed Rose hastily, on seeing that her eldest sister was preparing to let off one of the great guns of her erudition in the history of the building of Crowsden Grange, the share it had taken in the wars of the two roses, and the arrival from Normandy of the Lord of Ostremont, — corrupted by his English vassals into Stormont — in the time of William the Conqueror; — "we are all dying to know something about this incomparable Yorkshire brother and sister, whom you and Dora have fallen in love with?"

"Rose!" ejaculated her three sisters at once, in harmonious distances; to which the noddling old lady in the turban added, in a tone of tender remonstrance, "My *dear* Rose, how *can* you!"—

"You must tell me first," said I, by way of humouring the little damsel's impertinence, "the name of my sister's hero; which will afford me some clue to that of my heroine. But what makes you suppose that Dora is in love?"

"Because since her return from Yorkshire she has grown so sententious and conceited, as to be no longer like the same person."

"And is sententiousness, then, a symptom of the tender passion?"

"Not always. My sister Mary is constitutionally sententious. It is on record that she squabbled with her nurse in the correctest

English; and that her arguments in her leading strings would have borne parsing by Lindley Murray. But when a girl like Dora Powerscourt, who used to outrattle even *me*, takes to moralizing, be sure there is a hole in her heart! We *used* to accuse her of a *tendresse* for my cousin Reginald." —

"Rose, Rose, Rose!" again remonstrated her sisters.

"Why, is there any harm in it?" cried she, turning to each in her turn. "But since her return from Wrottesley — (what is it, — Park, Hall, or Place?) — she has never once mentioned his name!"

"And what name *has* she mentioned?"

"'Caroline!' There is a Caroline, it seems, residing in the neighbourhood of your house, who, from the pains you took to prevent your family seeing her, by abstaining from all invitations to hers and leaving your sisters not a single day for a visit, is clearly the lady of your thoughts! While, by Dora's mysterious way of talking about 'Caroline's brother,' and 'Adela's brother,' (Caroline and Adela being sisters) we conclude that the great unknown is the Hamlet who is likely to make our poor Ophelia at Hentsfield twine chickweed in her hair."

"When you know my sister better," pleaded Miss Stormont, with magisterial moderation, "you will learn how little value is to be set on wild conjectures!"

"Don't believe them, Mr. Wrottesley!" retorted the imp, folding her little hands together with an air of determination. "You will *never* know me better than now! Rattlepates like myself may be read through and through in a day."

"A great poet has told us, however, that

There is no woman where there's no reserve,"

said I, intending to pique her, as one fillips the nose of a favourite Italian greyhound to make it more playful.

"No *woman*, perhaps," she retorted; "but an immense deal of *girl!* I don't want to be a woman, Mr. Wrottesley, till one or two of my sisters have become wives."

Ellen, who had a tinge of Spanish jealousy in her disposition, as well as of Spanish beauty in her face, had stalked dignifiedly off to bed, on finding the spoiling child of the family bent upon

monopolizing the conversation. But Miss Stormont now cried "Shame!" and the blushing Louisa begged for mercy. Even the giddy prateapace seemed conscious that she had gone too far; and by way of giving a new turn to the conversation, took from the stand where it was blinking, neither asleep nor awake, Lady Stormont's favourite pink cockatoo; and having roused the poor bird by a series of playful persecutions, made it go through a variety of antics which no one but herself could have taught, and no one more than herself enjoyed.

I am sadly afraid that the fair sad face of Caroline Roxborough, which was apt to be the last object that floated before my eyes ere they closed in sleep, was a little eclipsed that night by an elf-like pigmy that came dancing before them, — now merrily enshrined

Under the blossom that hangs on the bough;

now attired in the goat-skin suit of Robinson Crusoe, walking tripsomely by my side, with a pink cockatoo on its shoulder; while I vainly endeavoured to exorcise the mischievous sprite by the lay of Theresa Krones, in the Bauer als Millionär:

Brüderlein fein — Brüderlein fein —
Willſt du nicht ſo kindiſch ſein! —

CHAPTER XVII.

Jack Cade. — It was never merry time in England since gentlemen came up.

George. — O, miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handicraftsmen! SHAKSPEARE.

I FORGET whether I confided to the reader that one of my motives for accepting the invitation to Crowsden, was the opportunity it afforded of escaping from maternal and sororial *surveillance*, so as to make the best of my way to Wilsbury instead of returning directly home.

Of course, I hinted nothing on the subject to the Stormonts; but having resisted their united attempts to prolong my visit, the following morning, after breakfast, I stopped short at Berkhampstead, and leaving there my mother's coachman and horses till my return, took posters to the farm. The note I had so trustfully

despatched, had been enclosed back to me by Andrew in a blank cover, so that I was certain he was at home; and I hoped to soften his heart towards me by the sight of my wasted limbs and languid countenance. It was only right he should know that he had not suffered alone.

This time, if I did not draw up at the gate of the farm, it was not from false shame of my consequence, but for fear of being refused admittance. I stole in like a thief in the night; and finding no one in the kitchen, (which the family called the house) made my way straight into the well-known parlour. But even that was deserted! The old grandmother's chair was empty, with its face turned towards the wall; and from a work-basket lying on the table full of seams of mourning, I inferred that the poor old lady was no longer of this world. — In the window hung the blind bullfinch's cage, — dusty, and lacking its usual canopy of the weeds that birds delight in. But the disconsolate bird came hopping towards the sound of footsteps, as though neglect had increased its tameness.

I was puzzled which way to direct my steps. There did not seem to be a creature in the house; and even had I known at what part of the farm old Grove and his son were engaged, my strength would not have served me to reach them.

Before I gave up the point, however, I determined to proceed to Andrew's room; and having made my way up the naked creaking stairs, knocked at the well-remembered door. All sounded hollow withhin. The door was locked, and the key removed. But the noise I made had the good effect of bringing forth a strange head from an opposite door. — I say strange; for how was I to recognize in a lean, sallow woman, attired in all the severity of bombazine up to the throat, the laughing, bright-eyed Bessie of two years before!

Apparently, I was as hard to recognize as herself; — for she addressed me as a house-breaker.

"You do not remember me, Miss Grove," said I, a little humbled. "I came here in hopes of finding my friend Andrew. I was not aware of the loss your family appears to have sustained."

"Mr. Wrottesley!" exclaimed the poor soul, in astonished

recognition. But even when I was known, there was no longer a trace of the obsequious deference which had forestalled my wishes and words at my last visit. I "stepped down" indeed, at her desire; poor Bessie closely following, as if still uncertain concerning my burglarious intentions. But when we reached the ground-floor, she did not ask me to "step *in*" to the parlour; but placed a chair for me beside the kitchen fire, which was swept up and trimmed; as if, although so early in the afternoon, its business for the day was over.

"We have never been into that room, Sir," said she in a voice as little resembling her own as the face she partially averted from me to hide her tears while pointing to the parlour door, "since the day of father's funeral."

"Your *father!*" cried I, starting up in unaffected amazement. "You do not mean to say, my dear Miss Grove, that you have lost your worthy father?"

"Why for whom else, Sir, do you suppose I'm wearing this black gown?" said Bessie, in the matter of fact phraseology of her brother.

"I fancied you had recently lost your grand-mother."

"More than three months ago, Sir. Poor Andrew was in mourning for her (in his heart as well as on his shoulders, for she 'd been a true friend to *him!*) at the time of his college misfortunes."

"But Farmer Grove, — so hale and hearty as he was when I last saw him!" —

"Trouble will break down the strongest of us, Mr. Wrottesley, as the lightning strikes the stoutest tree!"

"He had met with other afflictions, then, previous to —"

"No, Sir! Put that out of your head. Don't let your conscience cling to *that* for comfort. It was the mortification of my brother's undeserved disgrace that killed him, — neither more nor less. He never held up his head afterwards, Mr. Wrottesley, — he never held up his head again!" —

"And Andrew!" cried I, more abashed in presence of this untutored farmer's daughter than if she were a princess of the blood. "Where is Andrew? I expected to find him here. He

wrote to me, that is," I continued, lowering my voice and my eyes, "his hand-writing reached me from this place, some days ago."

"Yes, Sir. — On the day of father's funeral, I remember your letter being put into his hand. I remember his giving back another to your servant. But when we asked him what you had written about, he shook his head, saying, 'only to insult me further.'"

"But, indeed, I had no intention of insulting or vexing him!" cried I, warming at the imputation. "And if I knew where he was to be found at this moment —"

"It is more than I can tell you, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Bessie, a little mollified by the earnestness of my manner. "He left us, Sir, the day after the funeral: and Bella, who 's sometimes half beside herself, has got it running in her head that my poor brother will never darken our threshold again!"

"Did he leave you no address, then?"

"He told us he was going to town to my brother's; and that we should hear from him in a day or two. But we have not yet heard; and a letter from my sister-in-law to-day, said nothing of his arrival."

"This is strange indeed!" cried I, alarmed in my turn. "Was Andrew in low spirits, — I mean in a desponding way, — at the moment he left you?"

"My brother is never in what can be called low spirits, Sir. But he was grave, — very grave. How could he be otherwise, returning from his father's funeral, — a father lost, too, under such circumstances!"

"But he did not leave an impression on your mind," said I, avoiding a subject so afflicting, "that — that — he was not to be trusted with the care of his own life?"

"Andrew not to be trusted with the care of any thing on this 'varsal earth!" cried the plain-spoken Bessie, not altogether understanding what delicacy forbad me to express too clearly. But now that Andrew was gone, what had delicacy of mind to do at Wilsbury! —

"I would say that you have no fear," I commenced firmly, — *(but for my life I could not pronounce the word suicide!)* — "*that he is likely to do* any thing desperate?"

"Yes, very desperate!" replied the sorrowful young woman, tears rising into her hollow eyes. "As he quitted this room, Sir, he said to me and Bella with a look I shall never forget, 'Before you hear of me again, girls, my fate will be decided.'"

To me, this expression did not convey so lugubrious an idea as to his sister. Acquainted with the firm mind and pious spirit of Andrew, I entertained little doubt that the he had projected some new career, and was on the eve of instalment.

"Do you mean, Sir," cried the startled Bessie, when I communicated my opinion, "that you think he has gone for a soldier?"

"*A soldier!*" I repeated, scarcely restraining a smile at the notion of the meek reserved Andrew, in battle array. "You forget that, with your brother's superior abilities, various openings present themselves certain to lead to fortune and fame."

"Ay! his superior abilities — that was the rock, as poor father said on his death bed, on which we all split! — We were always talking of Andrew's abilities, which were a snare laid for our pride! — We wanted him to be more and greater than his people had ever been before him. — And see, Sir, in what all has ended!"

"Pardon me," said I. "You must not so wrong your brother as connect with his superiority of talent any thing that occurred at college."

"Mr. Wrottesley, he should never have gone to college! As father said in his last moments, if he'd been looking after his ploughmen in Wilsbury Mead, this never would have happened, and we might still have held up our heads."

"But when you are solemnly assured," cried I, almost angrily, "that in all that took place, Andrew was wholly blameless — that the whole fault was my own."

"You are very good to say so, Sir. But as if you, — his friend, — his old playfellow, — would have done him such an injury!" —

"Unintentionally, God knows! But I *did* it! Had I been aware of your poor father's opinion concerning this unhappy

My sisters were in the highest spirits; and my mother sat smiling over her favourite volume of Sturm's "Reflections," with her salts' bottle in her hand — to her the highest state of beatitude. For during the five intervening hours between my leaving Crowsden and reaching home, letters had been exchanged between the two families: — on the part of the Stormonts, to accept an invitation to dinner, accompanied by a *billet* anything but *doux*, from Ellen to her friend Emily, complaining that "Rose, with her usual contempt of decorum, had commenced a most outrageous flirtation with Mr. Wrottesley; while her lady mother sat by without an attempt at interference!" and on the part of my sister, to beg for a copy of the Polonaises which had missed fire the preceding night; with a postscript entreaty that Rose might be left to her devices — "Anything my dear, so that we keep him in Herts!"

These manœuvres I discovered, long afterwards, through the treachery of Rose. All I noticed at the moment was that, had I been the Prodigal Son, I could not have been more warmly welcomed.

"Where have you been since you left Crowsden, my dear Harry," cried my mother, in a tone of tender anxiety; "I was getting quite frightened!"

"Paying visits, mother, — visits to old friends."

"Not to Barming, I hope! Not to the Whichcotes?" exclaimed my two sisters in succession.

"The Whichcotes, I hold to be old *enemies*," said I, endeavouring to speak cheerfully. "But you must learn to do without me, young ladies, if you please; for to-morrow, I am obliged to start for town."

"For town? — Impossible! — At all events, only for a day, and to return again as soon as possible?"

"No—for good; to hasten my preparations for going abroad."

"No, no, no, no!" Not one of them would hear of it. "I was not half recovered. Besides, I had promised —"

"To spend a week with you at Hentsfield," said I; "which expired the day before yesterday."

"*Have we been back* a week!" was my mother's hearty ejacu-

lation, — implying a compliment which either I or Hentsfield was at liberty to appropriate.

"I must start early to-morrow," I persisted, seeing them all aghast. "I have business of some urgency in town."

"You really mean to go then!" said Emily, all but wringing her hands. "What *shall* we say to the Stormonts!"

"They will fancy we have again been making fools of them," sighed Dora.

"Don't talk as if you cared for my company only to farm it out to the Stormonts," I retorted with some bitterness. "Surely you are not more accountable to *them* for my comings and goings, than they to *you* for those of their much-quoted cousin Reginald!"

The blow struck home. Not a syllable more was uttered throughout the evening, concerning our engagements to Crowsden Grange. In that room, from whence I had been so often banished by their caprices, — in that room, in which, when any thing pleasant was going on, I used to be voted a nuisance, — an appeal to my tenderness would have been out of place. Far wiser to keep on the best of terms with me, by affecting the best of humours.

On the morrow, however, sorely against my will, a few tears *did* infuse themselves into our leave-taking. Dora and Emily were too panic-struck to say much. But a presentiment which the long absence from England I meditated insensibly introduced into my mind, that I might never see my mother's face again, — added to the nervous qualms produced by a sleepless night, haunted by reminiscences of the scene of the preceding day, — induced me to return from the carriage-door into the hall, to raise her hand once more to my lips. A stupid thing to do; for my unwonted effusion of sensibility caused the old lady to do what my sisters called "give way to her feelings;" and brought her, for the second time in her life, almost to the verge of hysterics!

But the moment I lost sight of Hentsfield, I lost sight of my fears.

Let any man, by the way, who has been enduring for a couple of months the living death of a typhus fever, and spending another in the bosom of far from the pleasantest family in the

world, arrive in London on a spring day, just when the violets are beginning to be hawked about the streets, and carts of forced sweetbriar, hyacinths, Persian lilacs, and cinnerarias, to jolt from door to door, — when the *beau monde*, terrified by the approach of Easter like an old beau by the prospect of his end, indulges in undue skittishness to make the most of its time, — let him traverse St. James's Street, with its crowded chatty club-windows, set up his rest, as I did, at the "Clarendon," not quite certain whether he have strength to attempt the Opera and sun himself in its galaxy of gas and beauty, — and he will understand the sensations (I was very near calling them feelings) which signalised the visit in question.

I did *not* go to the Opera. I did not even despatch a messenger to Roxborough's chambers to apprise him of my whereabout; determined to remain wholly my own master till I had made out something concerning my poor friend Andrew.

Having caused my sofa to be drawn close to the fire, — for recent illness and a chilly spring evening rendered acceptable both fire and sofa, — I requested to be denied to all applicants, as "not at home;" as if satisfied that the wings of all the winds would carry abroad the news of my arrival; and with the evening paper disregarded in my hand, I set about my favourite occupation of Castle-building.

Another week, and Wrottesley Wrottesley and his native land would have had a few words and parted. *That* much was certain. *That* much required no exercise of my boss of constructiveness. The query was, when should I return? For how many months, or years, or tens of years, was I to make preparation? So much had I exceeded my means, that my only chance of eventually arriving at Wrottesley Hall with an undiminished rent-roll, to commence such course of life as would do honour to its antecedents — (I do not mean by re-modelling and re-furnishing the place, for that had long been out of the question, but simply to live in it as others had done before me) — was by a residence abroad of some years' duration.

Every body knows that, if hundreds of thousands may be *expended on* the continent with much pleasure and some profit,

an income which passes for poverty in England will procure the luxuries of life in other lands, where money is not the cheapest thing going. Satisfied, therefore, that I need not enter La Trappe because unable to affect rivalship with Russian Princes, the prospect of my foreign expedition was far from unpleasing.

Perhaps during my long absence, the lanky boy of other days might become effaced from the too tenacious memory of Caroline Roxborough; and a polished traveller be permitted to supply his place. No fear of interference in the interim from the renewed courtship of Henry Temple. His college engagements would keep him to his post. For he was on the point of obtaining a fellowship; after which, it would be too much his interest to remain single for the chance of a college living, to admit of his brother's even inviting him to the Rectory, in direct opposition to the wishes of Roxborough Elms.

If forced therefore to renounce my ambition of gathering honours in the Senate and taking a prominent part in London life, I might at least look forward to being established half a year later in my fine old place; — refined in person, mind, and manners by having mixed extensively with the world; an experienced *dilettante*, — a man of taste, a George IV. on a small scale, — fastidious, graceful, and condescending.

All this, to use a favourite French idiom, smiled at me. My Cambridge debts were paid. I had plenty of ready money. My strength would rapidly return; and "the world was all before me, where to choose" — *not* my place of rest, — for of rest I was just then thoroughly weary; but a place, whose atmosphere and inhabitants were too light for my time to hang heavy.

All I wished was a partial reconciliation and friendly parting with Andrew, previous to my departure. If *his* prospects were tolerably promising, I should leave England content.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Et moi aussi, j'ai été déchiré par les épines de ce désert; et j'y laisse chaque jour, une partie de ma dépouille. CHATEAUBRIAND.

NEXT morning was the first I ever opened my eyes in London, feeling thoroughly alone; no human being cognizant of my pre-

sence, — no human being in all that mighty metropolis caring whether I were dead or alive.

On such occasions, it is generally the person one likes best to whom one's wounded spirit reverts for comfort. But whether it were the image of Caroline Roxborough that flitted through my mind, or of old Nicholls, or my mother, or little Rose Stormont, with her pink cockatoo on her shoulder, matters little to the reader. Suffice it that immediately after breakfasting on the unctuous cockneyisms called muffins, the indigestion produced by which is enough to damp the noblest of intentions, I set off under the guidance of one of those practical geographers called hackney-coachmen, in search of the *terra incognita* inhabited by the brothers Grove.

Dowgate Hill, with its stately Leather-sellers' Hall, was easy to be found. The adjacent *cul-de-sac*, scarcely admitting the turning of a truck within its precincts, indicated by the printed address, I judged it wiser to attempt on foot. It was little better than a blind alley: — blind, indeed! — for like the falls in Rogers's Jacqueline,

There 't was night at noon of day.

At two of the afternoon, at least, when I visited the spot, the gas was already flaring in its warehouses.

And of warehouses alone, it seemed composed. The ground-floor towards the street consisted of yawning roughly-paved gulphs, piled to their fire-proof iron ceilings with goods, littered with straw, and smelling of pitch and cart-rope; and unless the families said to inhabit Bark's Buildings were hoisted up by the crane attached to each several house, to some invisible tenement near the sky, impossible to guess where they abided.

After counting these warehouses from No. 1 at the corner, I addressed myself to a mechanic, who was assisting to load a porter's knot before the number indicated by my direction card, — a sulky looking chap in a leathern apron, with a badger's-skin cap upon his head, — to inquire whether the premises from which he emerged were those of Mr. Elias Grove.

All he vouchsafed in reply, without removing his cap, or offering any other token of courtesy, was a familiar nod. But a

moment afterwards, afraid perhaps that he might be affronting a customer, he informed me that Elias Grove was his name.

"Perhaps, then, you will have the goodness to inform me, Sir," said I, "where your brother Andrew is to be found?"

"That depends upon who asks it!" replied my surly respondent. "If a friend is wanting him, Andrew's where he ought to be, under my roof. But if e'er a one of those confounded Cambridge prigs should come inquiring, the rough side of my door and my tongue's the best he 'd need to look for!"

This was plain-speaking; E. G. did ample honour to his race! —

"I trust you will learn to reckon me among Andrew's friends!" said I. "And since he is with you, if you will at once enable me to see him, he will confirm my assertion."

This was boldly said; for I was far from certain that Andrew might not turn his back upon me at once. But my first object was to secure an interview.

"Enable you to see him, my man? That 's sooner said than done!" replied Elias, with thorough unconcern. "Andrew 's visiting o' me, it 's true. But he 's in a hurry to leave my place every morning;" (and who could wonder — such a place as it was!) "To-day, he was off into the Borough as soon as 't was light."

"And when do you expect him back again?"

"That 's neither here nor there, — though more, may be, than you 've any business to ask."

"I have a message to him, Sir," said I, "from his sister Bessie, at Wilsbury."

"My sister Bessie? — Then I humbly ask your pardon, Sir, for having kept you talking all this while in the street!" cried the leather-dresser, instantly humanized, and hastening to remove his fur cap. "I judged you were on quite another errand. Pray step this way, Sir!"

And he began marshalling me through the warehouse, groping his way through heaps of loose straw, piles of skins, and bales of goods, towards the back of the premises; where a staircase worthy of a stable loft, ran up beside the unplastered wall towards the upper stories.

"I need not intrude upon your family, Mr. Grove, since Andrew is from home," said I. "If you will give me leave, I will call another time, when there may be more chance of finding him."

Having foreseen the probability that on my reaching the city, Andrew might be abroad in that great metropolis whose sights and glories were so new to his eyes, I had provided myself with a letter of explanation, entreating (almost humbly) an interview before I left England for years. And this I proposed to leave with his brother.

The sort of way in which "he of the badger-skin cap," (as G. P. R. James would call him,) turned and re-turned it in his hands, like a country footman receiving a message from his master, — examining the hand-writing and seal, and then suspiciously reverting to my face again, as if mistrusting me for an impostor, — was hardly to be borne. Raising my hat to him, though he did not deign to acknowledge the courtesy by so much as the original nod, I made off to my hackney-coach, and bad the driver retrace his way to the west end.

Before I had jangled through many streets, however, it occurred to me that, being in the heart of the city, I might seize the opportunity to proceed to the Heralds' College; which, ever since my change of name, I had undertaken to visit, in order to verify the pedigree of the Wrottesley family, carried out by my desire, collaterally, so as to include my father and myself — at the time that wild visions of a coronet mingled with my Castles in the Air.

I was accordingly rattled up hill and down, through lanes that would have put to shame the back slums of Cambridge, and where, every now and then, I expected to stumble upon the Wynd inhabited by John Christie and his wife of the Fortunes of Nigel; till I reached the old pile on St. Benett's Hill, once the ancient mansion of the Earls of Derby, and still adorned with a variety of Stanley cognizances, including the quaint escutcheon of the Lords of Man; when lo! as I sat deliberating before the gateway whether to demand a private audience of Sir Isaac, or *proceed at once to the office*, my name was vociferated by a voice

that seemed familiar, and was qualified to outroar the rumbling drays of the city.

"Why, Wrottesley, my lad," cried Archdeacon Roxborough, "what in the name of all that's immoral brings you to Doctors' Commons? A licence, pray, — or a divorce? — To marry, or *un*marry! *That's* the question!"

"My business here, my dear Archdeacon," cried I, "is that of a bride, rather than a bridegroom, for it regards a change of name."

"Ay, ay! I forgot you had been Wrottesleytied since I saw you. Well! you were well paid for your trouble. I'd call myself Archdeacon Sheepshanks, or Dean Flimflam, for half the money. *My* errand with the long robe (which I have just slurred over) is to procure a special license for a noble lord said to be specially licentious. But I'm starting back to Pall Mall, and should manage to be in time for a book-sale I want to attend, if your griffins and wyverns are not impatient, and you 'll be kind enough to give me a lift."

"Number 108 and its fare are quite at your service," said I, not caring he should suppose me to attach the least importance to pedigrees or quarterings. And in a moment, the clattering steps were let down, and in pushed the wheezing monster, who resembled an asthma smothered in a feather-bed.

"And so you 've been playing out the play with a vengeance at Trinity?" cried he, with his usual familiar vulgarity. "A good thing for you, my boy, that your bread was earned for you. It requires a double allowance of emery and sand-paper, I can tell you, to scrub off such a blot as you have incurred. The only friends of mine who ever had the luck to be rusticated, are now expiating their sins, — one, as a veterinary surgeon at some settlement in Australia; t'other, as assistant clerk of the records in the most unhealthy of the Leeward Islands! A pleasant look-out for them; — but they could not have managed to make their way, rough or smooth, at home!"

"You do not seem to understand, my dear Sir, that I took my name off the books," said I.

"Ay, ay; we all know what *that* means! Liddledale took

his name off the books — the day after stuffing an effigy of the Master of Trinity, and turning it loose; riding hind side before, on a jackass, into Trinity Gardens!"

"My offences were of a somewhat less outrageous character. But tell me, how long have you been in town?"

"Long enough to write my name for my old friend, His Majesty, — and leave a card on my old friend, His Solemnity, Sir Robert Hawley. —"

Till that moment, it had never recurred to me that my guardian must have left Yorkshire for the meeting of Parliament, at the very moment of my starting.

"And engaged myself," resumed the Archdeacon, "to take a house-dinner at the Alfred with our friend, Charley —"

"Charley Roxborough take a house-dinner any where but at White's?" cried I.

"That we may get off early to the play, and hear Kitty Stephens warble her wood-notes wild in Guy Mannering."

"Charley Roxborough listen to any warbling save that of the Opera?" I again exclaimed, in amazement.

"Don't find fault with him for derogating in favour of a country cousin," retorted the Archdeacon, laughing. "Charley and I have family business to talk over; and he perhaps thinks that I shall hang less heavy on his hands at a club whose members are *all* country cousins, and at a home-brewed theatre which his ineffables would scorn to enter, than by chopping together at Stevens's. But I tell you what, Wrottesley: we 'll both dine with *you* to-morrow! You shall give us a *bisque d'écrevisses*, some mullets *en papillote*, a fore-quarter of lamb and asparagus, a pullet or ducklings, plovers' eggs, and a *fondu!* Not a thing more; and if Jacquier's wine be half as good as his predecessor's, I warrant we shan't be in any haste to go and hear Ronzi."

All this was mighty provoking! I had been in hopes of keeping my residence in town a secret, till I had secured an interview with Andrew Grove, and prepared every thing for my departure *for the continent*; aware, by old experience, that the

moment Charles Roxborough found me out, and invaded my domicile, he would become the cuckoo of the nest.

"I am almost afraid, Archdeacon, that I have an engagement for to-morrow," said I, scarcely venturing the announcement.

"Have you? Then it shall be the next day! I've got a week's holidays in town, and mean to enjoy them like a school-boy. By the way, my dear Wrottesley, — as I hear you managed to inveigle all sorts of straight-laced Puritans into your Cambridge spree, why wasn't that demure dog Henry Temple of the party? — You 'd have done our family some good, Sir, by having *his* gown stripped off his shoulders."

"Do you suppose, then, that Miss Roxborough has still any intention in his favour?" said I, uneasily enough.

"What her *intentions* may be, I can't pretend to guess. None at all, if she 's half the wise girl I take her for! For which of us, even the most consistent, ever fulfils his intentions? — Never saw a man take a long aim yet, that he didn't miss fire! But intentions or no, 't is plain that poor Car is fretting herself to fiddlestrings after her Parson Meanwell. You can't have seen her when you were last in Yorkshire, or you'd have noticed how plaguily she was altered!"

"I was in no house but my own and Sir Robert's. When Miss Roxborough visited my family at Wrottesley Hall, she excused her sister as suffering from a cold."

"Ay! a cold is a patent name for all ailments which doctors don't understand, and patients are unwilling to explain."

"You think her seriously ill, then?"

"Painfully, at all events. But girls of nineteen seldom die of love, or catarrhs. It is those who cough or sigh in second childhood to whom the disorder is fatal. Poor Car's blue devils will be exorcised by the bustle of her sister's wedding."

"Her sister's wedding? This is news indeed! I heard nothing of it in Yorkshire!"

"It has been settled within these few days. To say the truth, 't is that which brings me up to town. As my pretty cousin's trustee, I choose to see her twenty thousand pounds properly

settled on her; for it strikes me that neither Charley nor Lord Fortrose are altogether to be trusted."

"She marries Fortrose, then?"

"Whom else was she likely to marry? You and he are the only young men who have been allowed to set foot in Roxborough Elms since that unlucky affair of Henry Temple: when Sir Gratian and his son swore that the girls should never speak to a man again, till his pedigree had been warranted like a hunter's, and his rent-roll taxed like an attorney's bill!"

"Fortrose is not a bad fellow," said I, musingly.

"Negative praise, my dear Wrottesley! But you would have done fairer justice to your friend by saying that there is the making of a good fellow in him if he could be kept apart from Charley Roxborough."

"Which, if he marry his sister, is never likely to be the case."

"I don't know. Adela may have a will of her own; and Charley has been a bitter bad brother. I expect that Fortrose will be made to understand that two members of the Roxborough family at Fortrose Castle must suffice him; and both of the female gender."

"Is poor Car, then, to reside with her sister?"

"Where else?—The Elms are advertised to be let for a term of years."

"And what is to become of Sir Gratian?"

"*A la grâce de Dieu! He* fancies that he is to reside with his son, or near his son, and lead a life of pleasure about town—(poor old soul!)—for which he is about as fit, as one of his Russian pointers for a lady's lap-dog."

"I should think it would suit Charley quite as little to have such an appendage tacked to his establishment."

"At present, of course, young Hopeful bids fair,—because harassed by debts which can only be paid off by a good understanding with his father and Fortrose. But Charley is a fellow who 'd make every one belonging to him sleep on straw, that *he might* sleep on eider-down; and I suspect the poor old fellow's *best chance of a chimney*-corner for the rest of his days, is at the

Archdeaconry. I owe Sir Gratian many a bottle of good wine and haunch of good venison; and the best I have shall always be at his call."

I believed him; for in spite of the sensuality so much at odds with the colour of his cloth, which at times rendered the jovial humour of the Archdeacon disgusting, there was a spice of gentle blood in his coarseness; and, better still, a spice of Christian feeling at the bottom of his worldliness, which gave him the advantage over many a man more precise.

As we neared Pall Mall, (where the single palace then existing has since been replaced by hundreds) I could not forbear expressing a little surprise at the object of his visit.

"I scarcely fancied you the man, Mr. Archdeacon," said I, "to invest much capital in books!"

"And you did me justice!" he rejoined, in any thing but a tone of displeasure. "Since I came to man's, or rather to Archdeacon's estate, I have bought nothing beyond the Annual Register, to keep up my notions of how the world is wagging; and the Sporting Calendar, to keep Charley out of mischief when he comes to visit me at York. I inherited from my predecessor a lot of far sounder divinity than I should find were I to buy up all Hatchard's shop; and with that, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixóte, 't would be hard if a man couldn't get through a life, of which sleeping takes up a third, and his duties (among which I reckon eating and drinking) another."

"You are going to make purchases for a friend, then?" said I, unable to reconcile this frank avowal with his projects for the day.

"Buy books on commission? Not I! As soon dodge with a man's caprices, by choosing him a horse or a wife. No, no! My business at book-sales is not as a chapman! The truth is, my dear Wrottesley, that visiting London seldom, and Cambridge never, I have rarely an opportunity of stumbling against my college chums; and where am I so likely to find the shovel-hats collected, as at a book-sale? I go in, and turn over the leaves of a 'Dugdale,' examining the margin and edges with the air of a man who knows what he 's about; but before the business

of the day is over, generally hit upon half-a-dozen old cronies far more acceptable to me than old books. But we 're setting about a University club, Sir, which will be a pleasanter thing, and in the end a cheaper; for the best half of many a poor parson's stipend gets locked up in his book-case! But, by Jove! here we are!"

"And the sale over!" said I, examining the throng which was jostling out of the sale-rooms.

"Ay, ay! but there are half-a-dozen faces yonder which I must get a nearer sight of. Good bye, my dear Sir.—At seven tomorrow, Charley and I are your men."

I had rather they would have been somebody else's. But there was no remedy; and as little chance for a man even so little known as myself, to keep secret his arrival in town. By merely going to take an ice at Gunter's, for instance, to clear the city smoke from my palate, I found my arm hooked into that of Lord Hampden; who, having shaved the thing as close as myself at Cambridge, and been, as he informed me, "blown to shivers on the occasion by the discharge of his governor's great guns," now constituted an additional spangle or additional globule of mud (according to the reader's code and creed), in the admixture of mud and spangles called fashionable life. I derived, however, some solace from the encounter. Hampden being established with his family in London, from mere contrariety affected to envy my continental expedition. And most men like to be envied.

"Not but that London was pleasant enough just then," he said. "They had the steeple-chase for Easter week. Meanwhile, the opera was capital; the play at Graham's higher than ever. And this week," added he, "I have a couple of balls a night."

I expressed myself with suitable disgust with respect to balls; — I mean disgust suitable to the principles professed by the Roxborough school.

"And are you really young enough to go to balls, my dear Hampden?" said I, with a pitying glance at his beardless chin, though not a shade of whiskers garnished my own.

"*Better inquire* whether we are either of us *old* enough!"

said he, frankly. "I can tell you I have but little chance of a waltz with Lady Jane or Miss C., when some of the fellows you just now called parchment-faced, in White's window, appear at the starting-post."

"*Those* old fellows dance?"

"Old fellows of five-and-thirty? Certainly! Come to Almack's to-night, and you will see."

As my only chance of obtaining a ticket was through Charles Roxborough, to whom I would far sooner have pleaded a desire to go to an execution, I still pleaded that "I did not pretend to make a monkey of myself. *I* was not a lady's man."

"Ay, ay! all that did very well at Cambridge," cried Hampden, shrugging his shoulders; "but it is out of place here. A captain of dragoons, quartered among the bogs or the moors, is privileged to prefer cigars and whisky-punch to lemonade. But depend upon it the man who in London pretends to despise the fêtes of D— House or Lady J—, does so because he has no chance of admittance."

"Charley Roxborough would obtain me admittance to either, if I cared to ask him," said I, inexpressibly nettled, more particularly because the nods and bows of recognition bestowed upon my companion as we sauntered along Pall Mall, and more particularly the number of hands kissed to him from a variety of brilliant equipages, put me sadly out of conceit of my forlorn condition in the busy throng.

"I am not so sure of that!" replied Hampden, coolly. "Roxborough is a man generally received; but he is far from popular. In the jockey set his opinions are picked up like pearls and diamonds, for the dirty reason that every one hopes to make a market of them. But every one mistrusts him. His head is too cool and his heart too cold to make friends; and were he to smash to-morrow, none but his creditors would care a hang!"

This was so much my own opinion, that I was not hypocrite enough to gainsay it.

"A man like Roxborough," pursued Hampden, "who makes a regular trade of the turf, is only a better sort of leg; and doings of his have come to my knowledge, which, if done by one's

coachman, would have compelled one to discharge the fellow without a character."

"Roxborough is my friend, Hampden," said I; "and —"

"And would fain be your brother-in-law, they say; for I suppose *you* are the Yorkshire greenhorn to whom Fortrose's brother, Tom Mackay, alluded yesterday, when, after calling Charley Roxborough all the smooth, designing knaves that ever primed for *écarté* with green tea, he told me that, besides having hooked poor Fortrose for one of his country-dowdies of sisters, he had winged for the other some clodpole squire, with a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year."

"In the first place," said I, angrily, "the Miss Roxboroughs are not country-dowdies."

"And yet I would bet a pony that their brother has never let them set foot in town! But now I see that you really *are* the clod-pole, — which before I only suspected; and therefore no longer at your eschewing our London ball-rooms, where the idol of your soul (is not that the go among tender-passion-mongers?) is wanting. What is Almack's in *your* eyes but

> A garden, with all sweets except the rose;
> A fount, that only wants its living stream;
> A night, with every star save Dian's beam!"

"You are far more out, my dear fellow, than you think for!" cried I; "to prove which to your satisfaction, if not to mine, procure me a ticket, and I will accompany you there this very night!"

"Turn into King Street with me; and if my mother's carriage is still waiting, we can manage it directly. She has often a returned voucher, late in the day."

On arriving at Willis's, he bad me wait a moment in the hall, the scene of as many *battemens de cœur* as the floors above of *battemens* of another description; — and I trust the half-dozen footmen who were stationed there, wrought about in divers colours, "waiting for an answer" with the sort of covert sneer which is apt to curl the noses of standard footmen when unrestrained by the presence of their masters, had not the wit to discover how uneasy I felt while scrutinized by themselves in person, *as by the council of lady* patronesses above.

I had nothing, however, to fear. Hampden, who was as much the spoiled child of Willis's, as Rose Stormont of Crowsden Grange, brought me not only a single ticket, but vouchers for the next subscription: and having promised to take me up, in his cab, in time to make our appearance before eleven o'clock (which, in the palmy days of Almack's, when it could venture to give itself airs, was the last moment allowed to dawdlers), he left me to stroll my way back to my solitary dinner.

I was not sorry to find myself forced, as it were, into the gratification of my curiosity; and should have issued, with unqualified satisfaction, my orders to my servant to have my "things" in readiness to dress by ten o'clock (an order, by the way, which, considering the recency of my dressing-gown and barley-water system, naturally surprised him), had he not previously placed in my hands a letter in Andrew's hand-writing, which I waited only till he had taken himself out of my sitting-room, to open.

"My dear Wrottesley," it began: and this was so great an improvement on the blank cover in which my bank-note had been returned from Wilsbury, that my heart glowed again.

"My dear Wrottesley,

"I am far from wishing that any one should humiliate himself before me as you have been pleased to do. But, grateful for what I believe to be symptoms of genuine affection, I write to assure you that no resentments connected with my own injuries are rankling in my heart. But the respect I owe to the memory of my good father, who warned me, from the first, that no good could arise from a friendship disproportionate as ours, — that your portion in this world was pastime, and mine was labour, rendering perfect sympathy impossible, — determines me to decline all renewal of our connection. The act of levity which has caused me so deep an injury was one which, if practised against your equal in rank and fortune, would have had less fatal results.

"Set your mind at ease, however, on my account. I have embraced an honest calling, likely to be both pleasant and profitable; and, at some future time, trust to be yet useful to my family.

"If, however, it can at all avail to soften the poignancy of your present regrets, be assured that, were more extensive pecuniary resources than I can command wanted to carry out my projects, it is to *you* I should apply for assistance, because aware that it is to *you* my strait is owing.

"But on this head there is nothing to fear. Thanks to a liberal bequest from my grandmother, I am richer than I ever was in my life: and if, in the course of our foreign tour — for the safety and success of which you have my best wishes — you should chance to think of me, be it as of one in perfect charity with you, and sincerely able to subscribe myself,

"Your faithful servant,

"ANDREW GROVE."

While dwelling on the terms of this only too reasonable epistle, the bristles of my dignity rose on end against the *hauteur* with which the poor scholar vindicated his independence; and I entered the blazing ball-room at Willis's with a bright spot glowing upon my cheek, rendered only the more vivid by the extreme debility arising from recent illness. But this hectic flush accorded perfectly with the character which Hampden had thought proper to assign me; of a young man of enormous fortune, in a deep decline, about to visit Nice for the recovery of his health.

The last week of the month of April was certainly an oddly chosen moment for even the most diaphanous of *poitrinaires* to start for the south. But even had I been aware of the ridiculous rumours circulated by Hampden, I should scarcely have found courage for contradiction; so compassionate were the looks directed by black eyes and blue towards the unfortunate young man, too feeble to dance, and under condemnation from his physicians. One of the most ferociously-turbaned dowagers present made way for me on her sofa, lest I should suffer from standing; and considering the pity wasted upon me, I am afraid that, had they known that my seeming languor resulted chiefly from the false shame of an untaught gawky, scarcely able to distinguish between a quadrille and a valse, I should have undergone the usual fate of *impostors.*

It was, perhaps, because Lady Northamsted was my patroness, — the patroness whose sign manual had recognized my pretensions, — that I regarded Hampden's mother as by far the most charming woman in the room, and her daughter Lady Margaret, as the most high-bred girl. While gazing upon her movements, indeed, I almost regretted my ignorance of dancing. Not that she stood in need of any such partner. Throughout the evening, she was engaged for every dance; distinguished alike as the only daughter of an influential Countess, and a beautiful, unpretending girl who would have done honour to any situation in life.

As I stood watching her from behind a distant sofa, like a backwoodsman taking a long shot, I could not forbear whispering to Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley, Esq. — "Harry, my fine fellow, *there's* the sort of wife you should have chosen! Instead of addressing halting sonnets in your boobyhood to an idealized edition of one of Andrew Grove's sisters (even at the time, I scarcely knew which, and changed my Madonna Laura as often as the rhythm fitted for 'Belle' became incompatible with 'Bessie'); — instead of pledging yourself heart and soul to a rustic beauty like Caroline Roxborough, having appropriate predilections and engagements of her own; — instead of suffering your eyes to be dazzled by a prating minx like Rose Stormont, with little more of the woman in her than in her mother's pink cockatoo — I ought to have kept the bloom upon my heart as sacred as a head-gardener on his bunches of hot-house grapes; and been ready, on coming of age, to offer an unmortgaged hand, heart, and estate, to one who, by acceptance, would have doubled their value."

Lady Margaret, however, was so coldly gracious that, if incredulous concerning her brother's account of my dying condition, I saw she gave ample credit to certain passages in my history which he had previously recited for her entertainment. — It was clearly only for Hampden's sake she overlooked my boorishness, and found answers for my vapid questions.

"*Pazienza!*" was my secret exclamation after intersecting a telegraphic despatch from Lady Margaret to her brother, clearly

purporting how great a bore she thought me. "On returning to England from the grand tour, I will be a match for the proudest in your ball-rooms and loudest in Parliament. — The brightest among you shall canvass for admission to Wrottesley Hall. The brightest among you shall aspire to assist its master in building Castles in the Air."

CHAPTER XIX.

C'est toujours une belle chose d'avoir vingt ans; mais c'est chose doublement belle et heureuse de les avoir au matin d'un règne, au commencement d'une époque; de se trouver du même age que son temps, de grandir avec lui, de sentir harmonie et accord dans ce qui nous entoure. SAINTE BEUVE.

I WAS fully prepared for a fierce explosion of raillery on the part of Charley Roxborough, on hearing where I had spent the preceding evening; and, thanks to the attentions of which I had been the object, nerved myself to meet the attack with the dignity becoming an esquiredom which, by this time, had worn easy.

But when Charley walked in, self-invited, to breakfast the following day, he merely observed while skimming over the Morning Post, "You had a good ball last night, I see. For people whose object is dancing, Almack's is certainly the best in town."

So cool a contemplation of my change of habits distanced me. But to balance the million of questions I had anticipated, I could not refrain from *one*.

"Who told you," said I, "that I was at Almacks?" for I had already ascertained that, among the 'Messieurs' regarded by the Morning Post as deserving notice, Wrottesley Wrottesley was unmentioned.

"Who told me?" replied Charley laying down the newspaper. "Let me see! Some one came in late to White's, and, after complaining that Almack's was going down, declared that the patronesses were glad to admit even Harrow and Eton boys. Lord C., Lord S., and other husbands, brothers, or champions of their High Mightinesses of the Red Bench being present, — *this was of course* vehemently denied. When the Some One

(whose name you will excuse my mentioning, and if you have read the clever pamphlet called 'Les On,' you will know why,) — the Some One who had been abusing Almack's retorted, 'Why what do you call the young gentleman whom Hampden was dragging about with him to-night like two pointer puppies in a couple?'"

Impossible *quite* to refrain from the interjection, — it *may* have been an oath, — into which Roxborough was coolly endeavouring to goad me. —

"On which," continued he, taking no manner of notice of my interruption, "John Jocelyn, protested that Hampden's companion was no Etonian, but recently rusticated at Cambridge. And so it was, (my dear fellow! you are letting the whole urn run out upon the carpet!) so it was I came to know that you had honoured Almack's with your presence."

I was answered. I should have been glad to call "Some One" out, had I only known how; failing which, I tried to prove that I had been insulted by Lord John.

"Why he said nothing but the truth," was Charley's undisturbed rejoinder. "You never *were* at Eton, — or you would not to-day be disposed to tilt with wind-mills on finding yourself the object of club gossip. Nor was his manner of telling the truth in the least degree offensive. John Jocelyn is too high bred a man to indulge in vulgar detraction."

Where would have been the use of prolonging a discussion, in which I was as sure to get the worst of it as the bull of the arena, maddened by the paper darts of the *banderillo?* But oh! in my ignorance of the sterling value of such possessions as wealth, health, and youth, how did I envy the superior self-possession of the polished man of the world before me, who could "speak daggers, but use none;" and by mere steadiness of composure set every pulse in my frame a-throbbing!

"And is it true, my dear Roxborough," said I, (by way, perhaps, of avenging myself,) "that Fortrose marries your sister, and that Sir Gratian thinks of letting the Elms?"

"He does not *think* of letting the place. The tenant is found; the lease signed."

"And a long one?"

"Twenty-one years."

"Then it naturally interests me to inquire the name of my new neighbour?"

"Lord John Jocelyn."

I could not repress a start.

"Who is to be married after Easter to Clanalbin's sister," continued my visitor. "They had been engaged for this year past; but the Duke of Sheffield insisted on his son's taking his degree. In their position, and intended like Lord John for public life, it was indispensable that he should go through the University with credit."

"Certainly," said I; though, as my companion knew that I intended *myself* for public life, I felt it to be a slap in the face.

"He and Clanalbin were at Eton together," added Charley, opening and dismissing untouched a third egg with the provoking air of mistrust which, at one's own table, is so insupportable; "and they had the same private tutor at Cambridge."

"But is not this a sudden start of your father's about the Elms?" said I, re-assuming my vantage ground. "When I saw you at Wrottesley, you said nothing about it?"

"Why bore an invalid with our private affairs? But what did you imagine brought me down into Yorkshire?"

"Sir Gratian fancied that it was to see *me*."

"He might choose to give that colouring to my visit, in talking to the girls; whom he seldom takes into his confidence."

"But he could not expect to conceal from them that their family mansion was to be let?"

"At all events, he chose to keep them in the dark till the last moment; for, *entre nous*, they were the chief cause of the change. Adela having made up her mind, after two years' irresolution, to accept Fortrose, who is a capital fellow, (to say nothing of his fortune and earldom,) it would have been rash indeed to leave poor Car moping from year's end to year's end at the Elms; within reach of those designing Temples, and with no one to *forestal a relapse* into her girlish follies."

I was afraid to answer! — I dreaded to hear the huskiness of my own voice! —

"But in new scenes and among new people," added Charley, helping himself to a slice of *galantine* on purpose to leave it untasted on his plate, "Car will become open to new prepossessions. It would be neither natural nor pardonable that the girl of twenty should be so little wiser than the child of sixteen, as to insist on throwing herself away on a man wholly beneath her in birth, habits, and expectations."

This was a vast deal for Charley Roxborough to utter at once; for he was habitually sparing of words, except among the ineffables of his inner tabernacle: — people having a code creed and jargon of their own, of which I knew as much as of Cochin-Chinese.

"Temple is said to be sure of his fellowship," said I, hoping to keep up the discussion. "It can scarcely be his policy to marry."

"He is equally sure of eventual preferment from his college; and as my sister has twenty thousand pounds derived from her mother's fortune —"

"I always forget *that* part of her attraction," said I. "To *me* she has others of so much higher value, that I naturally overlook what a Cambridge tutor may be forgiven for remembering."

"His memory, however, will serve him to very little purpose," retorted Charles, compressing his lips with an air almost of menace. "Such a brother-in-law would be as little acceptable to Fortrose as to myself; and he and Adela will find her some Highland chief,—some MacBrechinloch of Glen Brechinloch,— with a clan, piper, and kilt, and all the rest of it, whose gay tartan will soon cut out Henry Temple's rusty gown."

Lest he should notice the flush of emotion that crimsoned my face at this announcement, I began to talk of the Elms.

"I almost wonder," said I, "that you consented to grant so long a lease of your family seat. If you ever settle in life, it will surely be within the next twenty years." —

"Settle in life?" interrupted Charley — (in much the tone he

would have exclaimed, 'Settle in New Zealand, or Van Dieman's Land!') — "And within the next twenty years? I rather think not! — Not a grain of the matrimonial in my nature! If ruined, I might, as an expedient, marry an heiress, when we should reside on her estate; or, if at fifty gouty or rheumatic, might be tempted to make an honest woman of the surest and safest form of nurse. But in neither case, nor under any possible circumstances, would I live at the Elms."

"You might live at a worse place, Charley!" said I, spirited up for Yorkshire and my neighbourhood.

"I am not sure but I would rather live in the King's Bench," he coolly replied, "than subside into a country Squire. Born in London, I believe I was born *for* London, — like an oak apple for its tree. A London life is the only life that suits me. At the point England has attained in the history of civilization, cities constitute the natural residence of her patricians; nor do I feel completely myself, unless when inhaling my natal atmosphere of London smoke."

"You are the best judge of your own feelings," cried I. "As we used to say at Cambridge, —

Ne quidquam sapit qui sibi non sapit.

You would probably be a miserable man without your club, your opera, and your Tattersall's."

"Under certain circumstances, of course, I find the country pleasant enough," added Roxborough, as if gravely arguing the question. "In another man's house, for instance, where the *cuisine* and shooting are first-rate. For we have reached a grand moment, Wrottesley, in the history of the country. Having secured by a glorious war, a glorious peace, and the lead in European politics, I am much mistaken if the present King and his successor do not restore to the English crown that prerogative which evil times compelled the Stuarts to fling overboard, like a mast in a storm."

I now listened in earnest — aware that my friend retained a cameleon-like tinge of the colours he imbibed at Oatlands.

"Take my word for it," added he, in the tone of a person *announcing good news*, "that the reigns of George III., Fre-

derick I., and Ernest I. will assign to the aristocracy of Great Britain the privileges they enjoyed in France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And consider, my dear Wrottesley, what it is to live in an era like that of Louis Quatorze: — a very hot-bed to the arts, joys, and comforts of life! By the time you return to this country (if indeed you persist in leaving it at a moment so auspicious), you will find that the shallow surges of faction, after frothing themselves into nothingness against the base of the throne, have receded like an ebbing tide; leaving to the King the enjoyment of bestowing as a concession what the people pretend to extort from him as a right."

"The time is past," said I, "for England to accept benefactions from her rulers. All the country wants, is her own."

"Yes, confound her! But who is to define what is her own, if not her anointed sovereign and the ministers of his selecting? — The present Government, thank heaven, is as steady both in principles and place as the rock of Gibraltar. The Tories are in for the next fifty years — fifty years destined to consolidate the prosperity of the country!" —

Cheered by the sanguine tone of his anticipations, I began, like *him*, to see a new Trianon start up under the haystack-roof of the royal cottage — a new Versailles expand in Buckingham Palace — new bridges extend their cast-iron arches over the Thames, or hang suspended on their piers; — and London embellished by public picture galleries, gardens, and fountains, into something as nearly resembling the brilliancy of Paris as the paste diadems in Rundell and Bridges' shop, the diamond coronets for which they serve as models. I beheld a new Molière in Poole, a Racine in Sheil, a Lully in Bishop, a Perrault in Nash, a Mignard in Lawrence, a Colbert in Sidmouth, and a combination of Louvois and Lebél in Sir William Knighton! —

"We not only possess the most complete and self-dependent Government which ever strengthened the councils of a nation," resumed Charley, with his usual 'forcible feebleness,' "but are about to exhibit to the world what the domestic misfortunes of the royal family have so long denied us — a refined and

accomplished court; — the days of Charles the Second without their profligacy, and of George the Third without their rice pudding and roast mutton. I am thankful for having lived to see our beloved King released from the trammels of the Regency, and able to do justice to his own intentions."

Infected by what appeared his deep-seated loyalty, which was probably inspired by the smoking "cups which cheer, but not inebriate," he had been quaffing, I did my best to emulate his well-bred patriotism; closing my eyes and ears against Manchester and its massacres, or the turmoils of Brandenburg House. But when about to hail the prospect of sitting under the shadow of my own fig-tree in such a state of affairs, the recollection that my hands were as much shackled by my follies as ever those of the Regent by Parliament, caused me to heave a paviour-like sigh.

"Is she dark or fair, Wrottesley?" — inquired Charley, affecting an indulgent smile.

"Of whom are you talking?" —

"The damsel of whom you are thinking."

"Would to heaven," cried I, "that I were thinking of any thing half so agreeable!"

"Then what was it produced a puff capable of extinguishing the spirit-lamp of the tea-kettle?"

"Do you remember," "said I, "John L—'s favourite doggrel? —

> The extortions of the tribe of Levi
> Upon my wreck'd estate hang hea-vy.

Your *protégés* G— and Z— and L—, with their astounding fifty per cent., are sad enemies to a man's peace. Instead of settling in the splendid city or glorious kingdom you have been describing, and endeavouring to persuade some charming Caroline Roxborough to share my Paradise in Park Lane or Grosvenor Square, I must even economize for the next half-dozen years in some confounded foreign town, scented with tobacco, aniseed, and coffee grounds; that my debts may be paid off, before I recover the command of my income."

"*You deliver your* jokes with a very grave face, Wrottesley!"

said my companion, finishing his breakfast hastily, as though I put him out of patience.

"Jokes, my dear fellows? — I never was more in earnest in my life!"

"Do you mean, that if you have thoughts of perpetrating what Beaumarchais calls matrimony, '*de toutes les choses sérieuses la plus bouffonne*,' you intend to burthen your shoulders during the best years of your life, by gradually clearing off a load of debt; when you might free yourself by a stroke of the pen?"

I suppose I looked more than usually stupid; for he condescended to explain.

"By selling your Winchmere property," said he, "you would be clear at once."

"By sinking two thousand a-year of my income? — Thank you!"

"Whether a man have sixteen thousand to spend, or eighteen, takes neither a dish from his dinner-table, nor a coat from his back," was Charley's dry rejoinder. "Whereas, to lay by ten thousand a-year out of eighteen, till his best days are gone by, makes what, at Eton, we used to call, a scug of him at once."

The idea of being thought "a scug," whatever that might be — was painful. But the thought still uppermost was that instilled into my mind by old Sir Robert; — that a man has no right wantonly to dismember a property consolidated for hundreds of years; — more particularly when derived, like mine, from the partiality of a relative, who would have fed on porridge rather than alienate an acre.

"A good principle enough," was Charley's biting reply, "were the estate an appanage of hereditary rank, Old Sheffield, for instance," said he, "would be unpardonable, were he to melt away the estate, in consideration of which his dukedom was created by Pitt."

"In my opinion," I stoutly rejoined, "the representative of an ancient line of commoners has a position to maintain quite as honourable as that of a newly-created peer."

"More so, let us hope!" he replied. "But unaccompanied by the privileges and responsibilities so onerous to the ennobled.

Don't suppose, however, my dear Wrottesley, that *I* advise your breaking up your property on coming of age. I only mean, that in your place, I should prefer being released from painful obligation at the cost of a few clover-fields!"

Alas! how many a man has eventually become a Squire Lackland, from the off-hand ease with which some unprincipled intimate suggests facilities, "pleasant but wrong," to a stranded man, for setting himself once more afloat upon a sea of folly!

After breakfast, Charles Roxborough pleaded an appointment at the Jockey Club, as an excuse for detaching himself till dinner-time; and a suspicion which glanced into my mind, that he did not care to be seen on the *pavé* of St. James's Street, with a man whom "Some one" at White's had placed in a ridiculous light, was mortifying enough to a young blockhead, whom a gleam or two of fashionable sunshine had brought into the fullest bud and blossom of conceit. But I took my revenge by nodding to him with the most familiar air of superiority, as I sat lounging on my horse by Hampden's side, under shelter of the crooked-armed elder trees, which, at that time, shaded the still more crooked road in Hyde Park, beside Fozard's riding-school — (that barn-like building, as well as the elder-trees, and most of those who used to crouch under them in an April shower, having long ceased to cumber the earth;) at a moment, too, when he was leaning into the carriage of one of the prettiest women in London, whose name was as extensively connected with his own as her title with that of her lord.

When we met at dinner, however, I pretended a still more impertinent ignorance of both; on which Charley, in reply to my inquiries, informed me, that the lady with whom he was engaged in conversation when I so unceremoniously plucked him by the sleeve, was the wife of an Irish Archbishop; adding, with a smile, which made me look hard at the carving-knife beside my plate, — "Could not your playfellow, little Hampden, inform you even of *that?*"

Our sparring might have ended in a real quarrel, but for the *presence of the Archdeacon*; who was not the man to bear having

so excellent a dinner spoiled, either in eating or digesting, by an ill-timed skirmish.

But though he prevented what, had it been suffered to proceed, might have proved the means of releasing my destiny from the ascendancy of its evil genius, the mode he adopted of bringing his fashionable cousin into good humour again, did me the service of opening my eyes still wider to his practices. Exploits which seemed to my ignorance of sporting life deserving of the tread-mill, were treated as traits of genius; and I scarcely knew whether to take as joke or earnest the unghostly churchman's allusions to the Seïds of the Newmarket Mahomet; — rascals whom he used as implements, to bet against him for the benefit of the odds; or buy in valuable horses exposed to the risk of being claimed for a certain sum, as winners against others of inferior value; besides hundreds of minor services which had better be nameless.

At first, I was on the point of exclaiming "swindlers!" By degrees, I began to talk, like the older hands, about "capital jockeyship," — and "the necessity of pulling up one's losses." But by the time the champagne — recommended by the Archdeacon as the best invalid's wine in the world, the bath invented by Medea to restore the health of Jason, had gone its rounds for the fourth time, — I began to feel immensely puzzled as to the relative position of jockeyer and jockeyed; and ended by being quite of the opinion of Charles Roxborough (and the pea and thimble men) that people not sharp enough to take care of themselves, are legitimate objects "to be tuk in."

After a fourth bottle, and the maraschino with which it was topped up, I was puzzled about nothing, and of no man's opinion but my own. — "Borne upon the seraph wings of ecstasy," (or intoxication) I was ready to dispute with Sir Humphry Davy the discovery of his new gas, — with Wollaston of his new metal. — Had poor Grove been present, I should have arrogated to myself the honours of a senior wrangler; — or if Hampden had dropped in, which was more than probable, have perhaps laid claim to Roxborough's pretended flirtation with the lady of the primate. As it was, I made good my pretensions to remarkable ability by

contriving to make my way in Charley's cab to Graham's, and lose there at *écarté* double the amount of the bank-note so scouted by my poor Andrew; though blind-drunk at the time, and unable to keep my seat without holding to the chair.

"I am come to pay you a farewell visit, since you appear still too weak to find your way to Park Place, my dear young friend," said Sir Robert Hawley, who entered my rooms the following day ere my head or heart had half done throbbing after the exploit. "You cannot have forgotten your promise to leave England before Passion Week; and now that I find you looking so much worse than when we parted at Wrottesley Hall, I am doubly anxious you should lose no time in seeking a milder climate."

Provoking enough to be unearthed at such a moment! — But how could I be ass enough to expect, after giving a dinner so *recherché*, to be let off by the waiters from the customary advertisement in the Morning Post — that "Yesterday Mr. Wrottesley Wrottesley entertained Mr. Charles Roxborough and a fashionable party at dinner, at the Clarendon Hotel!"

Even Dolly's Chop-house would have attained temporary fashion from Charley's having eaten one of its dinners. But it was hard enough I should become the victim of his notoriety; as the means of acquainting my guardian with my sojourn in town.

Neither soda-water, however, nor seltzer-water, nor any other approved antidote to the consequences of "the invalid's best beverage," inspired me with courage to look Sir Robert in the face, while compelled by his cross-examination to avow that my carriage was ready, — my passport signed, my courier impatient! — If I had foolishly accepted a dinner engagement for the following week at the Duke of Banff's, and pledged myself to Hampden to change my vouchers for the ensuing set at Almack's, it was easy to revoke my acceptance. "I could write and excuse myself to both." The old gentleman was so much too far North for me, indeed, that he undertook to leave on his way home, the apologies he made me write in his presence: — the zeal with which he managed to get everything in readiness for my departure the following morning, arising I suspect from the instructions I *had already written* to my banker and his own, to recall a thou-

sand pounds of my credit with Laffitte, and transfer it to the account at Drummond's of "Charles Edward Roxborough, Esq."

On which hint, Sir Robert saw clearly that I was not safe till I had crossed the Channel! —

CHAPTER XX.

Oui, laisse-moi rêver! — Ah! que la vie est belle,
Quand un rêve fait sur sa nudité
Pleuvoir les rayons d'or de son prisme enchanté,
Frais comme la rose, et fils du ciel comme elle,
Jeune oiseau de la nuit, qui, sans mouiller son aile;
Voltige sur les mers de la réalité. NAMOUNA.

Now that every spring carries half London to Paris, (like the fashion-mongers and theatrical managers "in search of novelty," but not, like them, to impose it upon untravelled dupes as of native growth), I am often compelled to join the chorus of optimists who delight in belauding the improvements of the French capital. The lighting and paving, the carving and gilding, the fountains that give their waters to the winds, and the asphalte which gives its dust to the fountains; — the Hôtel de Ville, which Henri Quatre would be puzzled to recognize; — Nôtre Dame, which, like a *religieuse défroquée* by the revolutionary troubles, seems to tremble at being extricated from cloistral seclusion; — the Champs Elysées, whose gloom has given way to gas, and its mud to granite, while its classical origin is attested by a Hippodrome, and a winter garden of the Hesperides; — the termini of interminable *chemins de fer;* the Quartier Lorette, corresponding with the Quartier Latin like the Arctic with the Antarctic Pole; the *cafés à la moyen âge;* the *restaurants à la Régence;* and, above all, the stately old palace which, as a compensation for its previous humiliations, contains the young family of the new dynasty, — are annually glorified in my hearing; till smitten by the infection, I throw up my cap with the rest, crying — "Vive Rambuteau! — Vive Rothschild! — Vive Louis Philippe!"

But here, seated before my solitary writing-desk, and addressing that beloved public which is too good a friend for me to

delude, I cannot, for the life of me, help owning that whatever may have been the political sins or monarchical weaknesses of the elder Bourbons, the Paris of the Restauration — the Paris I visited in 1821 — was a mighty pleasant place. — I was about to add, "to play the fool in;" — but the folly of some is the philosophy of others; and frivolity was then in the ascendant.

The Paris of those days was, in fact, far more Parisian — far more the Paris which Sterne rendered familiar to his country-people — than the city which has borrowed pavements from Cheapside and tobacco from the Broadway. Reminiscences of the incense offered to Napoleon, still floated in the air. — The demon-like hoof-prints of the revolutionary struggle were still perceptible in the mud. — One expected to find History wandering about the streets, in search of traits to jot down and sites to perpetuate; and the one-armed, tawny-whiskered, sun-burned invalid, who trod on one's toe at the street corner, was as likely as not to be a hero who had left the missing limb at Moskow, his complexion at the Pyramids, and temper at Toulouse; and who was looking out for an opportunity to avenge on some gaping English tourist the delinquencies of Sir Hudson Lowe. And was not such a veteran a far finer fellow than the sprucest Spahi of the Armée d'Afrique, making razzias upon the *bonnes* of the Jardin des Plantes? —

And then Talma and Georges, Mars and Fleury, were acting, and Feydeau was piping up its merry *chalumeau*. The Montagnes Russes were crushing people's bones, and the bones of the *salon* crushing people's fortunes; and a thousand Satanic excitements were allowed by the police to

Create a soul under the ribs of death,

and bewilder the batter-brains of boyish travellers like myself.

I enjoyed myself, too, all the more for recent privation. Nor did my too temporary remorse for the injury inflicted on my earliest friend weigh much upon my conscience. As Rose Stormont had taken the liberty of observing, on the subject of my *Cambrigde* disaster, — "At our age, Mr. Wrottesley, vexations *are soon forgotten.* A gray-beard alone broods upon his troubles;

because the object which casts no shadow at noon-day, leaves, towards set of sun, a long dark trace behind."

The very elasticity of the air of Paris communicates itself to every susceptible nature. Light diet, light wines, light pastimes, inspire a sense of enjoyment that subtracts twelve hours from every twenty-four; and the vehicle of life dashes down hill without shoe or drag-chain, without being upset at the bottom.

Above all, the Paris of that day was Paris the courteous, — a Paris *qui avait l'honneur de vous saluer*, — which rode no steeple-chases, and would have scorned to borrow the cast-off sportsmanship of our *perfide Albion*. The children in the Tuileries Gardens did not exhibit their little coffee-coloured faces and meagre legs, in a Scotch bonnet and kilt; and the *griffon* snarling on the lap of Madame la Marquise appeared in far better keeping than a King Charles with her own *figure chiffonnée*.

It may be that I see the things of to-day with blinking eyes; and that the head compelled to call in the foreign aid of *Pommade Melainocome* and *Dents Osanores*, generates only discontented thoughts. But certain it is, that the splendours of the Hôtel des Princes have never obliterated from my mind that dingy chamber in the original Hôtel Meurice, (which, when younger, was called the old Hôtel de Noailles,) where I ate my first *potage à la Reine*, and quaffed my first unmedicated glass of Château Margaux.

It was just the moment of the year when, opposite the windows of Meurice's, (every pane of which might suffice for a window in the *multum in parvo* modern establishment that bears his name,) the lime-trees of the Tuileries were seen to deepen every hour the delicate tint of their robes of green; and I, who had never beheld a flower in London, save in a huckster's cart or a lady's bower chamber, could not help fancying the gush of lilac blossoms which soon after my arrival clothed the parterres before the château, must be unreal as those on the fairy garment of *Peau d'Ane*.

For Paris, in spring time, is a very flower bed! The various

marchés aux fleurs send forth their bushes and *bouquets* in all directions, to cheer the garret window of the sempstress, or brighten the vestibule of a minister of state; and from the orange trees of the public gardens to the roses of Fontenay, the breath of summer smells wooingly in all directions.

But though charmed as a child by these novelties, and often tempted to become a starer into shops or watch, among the *badauds* on the bridges, the progress of a raft of firewood or the plungers of Vigier's baths, I was not wholly blind to the higher objects of enthusiasm abounding in the metropolis of modern intelligence. Nor was I the less interested by the Guidos and Raphaels of the Louvre from having been incited to study the characteristics of the great masters, by the possession of a picture gallery of my own.

The theatres, too, (which, thanks to my early drudgery with Miss Primer and a variety of lessons in the language, which, on the advice of Blank Blank, I was daily imbibing, I was fully competent to follow,) afforded me an endless source of enjoyment.

My life was as the crystal drop of a girandole, cut into a thousand brilliant facets. But it was not yet given me to surmise over what squalid misery, what deep-laid scheming, what weariness of spirit, what convulsions of remorse the veil of silver gauze I looked on was artfully thrown; when, through the warm haze of a summer evening, I saw the gay population saunter forth; — the patricians to enjoy their drive or ride in the lime-embalmed Champs Elysées, — the plebeians to loiter upon the bridges or on the busy quays; a gay confusion of sanguine hearts and conscienceless souls, who, by attiring the seven deadly sins in a carnival garb of velvet and ermine, succeed in keeping their ugliness out of sight.

From the bitterness with which, even now, I retrace the picture, it will readily be surmised, that I was made to pay a heavy penalty for my infatuation. Yes! I own it. I played as tyros play: I loved as tyros love. Nor was it till it had been proved to me in black and white, that I had been cheated by *Chevaliers d'Industrie*, and jilted by a coquette, I found courage

to write and acquaint Charley Roxborough, (I had sufficient sense of decency not to address Sir Robert!) that my heart was full, and my purse — empty.

It would scarcely have done for my Achates to reply, that "he chose only to assist me with the Jews, when he could also assist me to waste the funds of their providing." — But he contrived to do as little as possible; and I was, accordingly, reduced to the sense of humiliation apt to weigh down a man's spirits when he not only finds silver in his pocket in place of the gold to which he is accustomed, but is forced to keep reckoning even with the silver.

It is ever my darker hours, however, which give rise to my brightest visions, as the brilliant lightning glances from the blackest cloud; and no sooner did the positive pleasures of life grow unattainable, than I began to construct Castles in the Air far grander than Versailles.

Having made up my mind to start for Baden, whither the better half of Paris had already betaken itself, I began to feel ashamed of having squandered my louis d'ors and time, without knowing more of the French capital than the moving panorama of its outer show. I had seen nothing of its society; had enjoyed only purchasable pleasures. As Charley Roxborough observed, in the letter of reprobation which accompanied my new letter of credit, — "I had contented myself with eating the peel of the orange!" —

But how to reach the pulp? I had brought with me only the usual Foreign Office letter of introduction, which procures a man a formal dinner-party at his embassy, and diplomatic protection in case some swindler attempts to forge his name or some bravo to cut his throat; and shortly after my arrival, Sir Charles Stuart had quitted Paris for the summer. All I could do, therefore, was to contemplate the stately hotels of the Rue de l'Université, and smiling ones of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and wonder within myself, whether their inhabitants differed as widely from my discreditable connections, as Caroline and Adela and Lady Margaret Hampden, from the common herd.

One day, a glaring one in July, as I sat breakfasting at Tor-

toni's on iced prawns and fricandeau, making up my mind whether to go and laugh at Potier that night, or smile at the graceful *naïvetés* of Mademoiselle Mars, and determined, if the dog-star continued to rage so furiously, to betake myself to Baden on the morrow, the name of "Des Auliers," which met my eye in the "Journal des Tribunaux," over which I was glancing, recalled to my recollection that, somewhere in my dressing-box, I had a letter addressed to a gentleman residing in Paris, whose name was either the same, or nearly similar; which I had promised Sir Robert Hawley to deliver in person. Yet, though it was the only commission with which my kind old friend had charged me at parting, so immediately after my arrival, had I flung myself into the vortex of vulgar dissipation, that, till that moment, the letter had completely escaped my memory.

Instantly hurrying home in dismay, I discoverd what I feared must have been mislaid, between the leaves of my blotting-book, in my dressing-case, not a whit the worse for wear. The address to "Monsieur,

"Monsieur Des Auliers,
"Rue des Tournelles,
"au Marais,"

being as legible as Sir Robert's fine old Italian hand could make it, I determined to lose no further time in executing my commission.

The Marais was a district of course thoroughly out of my beat. But if addicted to rural pleasures, I might have found them in its dreary streets; a very tolerable crop of grass having converted into green lanes several of those adjoining the ancient one which was my object. Having taken it into my head, that Monsieur Des Auliers was one of the foreign correspondents of an agricultural journal which Sir Robert had been at great pains to establish, and nothing doubting that the voluminous packet of which I was the bearer, contained instructions for the cultivation of fiorine grass, or the extermination of the fly in turnips, I could not help feeling that the pastoral approach to his residence was highly appropriate. But on reaching the handsome old-fashioned stone mansion answering to the number on my letter, *I found it alas!* shuttered from *rez de chaussée* to *mansarde!*

The Sieur Des Auliers was probably gone to get in his hay in the country. Anticipating the appearance of one of the lanthern-jawed, dilapidated community of *portiers* which has replaced the stately Suisse of other days, — vampers of old boots, and breeders of young canaries, who have been consolidated into a class by the graphic pen of Paul de Kock, — I determined not to consign Sir Robert Hawley's packet to his care; when, lo! I was agreeably surprised at finding the *porte cochère* partially opened by a bright-faced, neatly dressed, middle-aged *bonne;* so much resembling one of Molière's chatty *servantes*, so willing to be questioned and eager to reply, that, on finding "Monsieur had been at his *campagne* since the beginning of June," I was almost inclined to bid her open the letter, and satisfy her curiosity, as she was cheerfully satisfying mine.

For no sooner did she discover, by a glance at my hat — the surest indication abroad of English origin — "*que monsieur étoit étranger*," than she begged me to step in — offered to open the shutters, that I might sit down and rest myself after a walk in such sultry weather; and when she found me resolute against giving so much trouble, put so much personal pride into her request, that I would at least take a turn in the garden, and admire "*les beaux œillets de Monsieur*," that I could not find it in my heart to persist in my national reserve.

Having traversed the stone gateway under the guidance of Martine (I felt as sure the name of the buxom *bonne* was Martine as that my own was Wrottesley Wrottesley!), admiring all the while the jaunty air with which, after carefully closing the *porte cochère*, she stuck her hands in the pockets of her snow-white apron, I found myself in one of those pleasant sunny little nooks of flowers and verdure which, even in the heart of Paris, bear testimony to the superiority of its atmosphere. The carnations the good woman was so proud of, were bright and fragrant enough to do no dishonour to the button-hole in which she insisted on placing one of the finest; and over a grass-plot still greener than the adjoining street, drooped the feathery branches of a *Vernis du Japon* tree, which Jussieu has rendered a favourite ornament of Parisian gardens.

The lofty walls around us were screened to a certain height by *espaliers* of winter fruit-trees, as prolific as those of an English country garden; and the intervening flower-plots variegated with a rich display of summer annuals dazzling to look on.

"You are quite in the country here," said I, as a noisy chaffinch struck up his monotonous song from the noble tree over our heads.

"Monsieur would scarcely say so," said she, "if he had ever seen my master's beautiful country-seat."

The word country-seat carried my imagination full gallop to Burgundy, Picardy, or Lorraine. But I might just as well have stopped short at what *I* considered the Parisian suburbs. — The "*campagne*" was a citizen's box at Sceaux! —

"My master, Sir, obtained a gold medal for his roses at the Luxembourg flower-show," added she, shaking out her apron as a peacock does its plumes; "and grows the finest fruit in the arrondissement!" —

My first surmise was decidedly right. Des Auliers was a correspondent of the West Riding Agrarian Association! —

"It is his fondness for his garden, Sir," resumed Martine, "which hurries him, every spring, out of town. For you will easily believe, Sir, that Madame Aulai would not be much displeased to remain a little longer in Paris. — *Il fait si bon à Paris!*" cried she, shrugging her shoulders with an air of the intense enjoyment which no one better than a Parisienne feels and expresses.

By her way of pronouncing the name, of her mistress, or Aulay, I saw that my good guardian was a little out in his orthography; and his misgivings on the subject were probably the cause of his forbidding me to entrust his letter to the post.

"But surely," said I, "Sceaux is but a few leagues distant from Paris?"

"Only five quarters of an hour; which makes me hope that Monsieur will take the gondole one of these fine mornings, and deliver his letter in person to Monsieur and Madame."

Accustomed to associate the idea of a gondole with the Canal

Grande instead of with the dusty road of the Parisian *banlieue*, I hesitated.

"They will be delighted to see you," said the comely *suivante*, with the prompt heartiness of her Molièrian prototypes. "Monsieur sees a great deal of company at Les Epines, throughout the summer; and Madame will naturally be eager to welcome a fellow-countryman."

"Madame is English, then?" cried I, my faith in my previous hypothesis a little shaken.

And so, unluckily, was Martine's as to my acquaintance with her master. If his friend, how could I possibly be ignorant of a fact known from one end of the Rue des Tournelles to the other? — And who could say but that the individual whom she had incautiously introduced into her master's premises might be a thief, — a swindler, — an *échappé des bagnes!*

I read all this, in a moment, in her speaking countenance! But already her mouth was closed. Not a syllable further could I get out of her, except (in reply to my reiterated inquiry) that her master's *campagne* was situated in a by-road, the third turning out of the village of Sceaux. But having stated this just as we had accomplished, for the second time, the circuit of the little garden, she made so decided a turn into the *porte cochère*, that I had nothing for it, when she applied the key to the cumbrous door and set it ajar, but to make my unresisting exit.

On raising my hat to her at parting, I saw that every vestige of colour had deserted her florid face. What a tale would she probably make out of her adventure, when recounting the story, that evening to the milk-woman or nearest grocer's wife! And what manifold precautions were probably taken, in case the housebreaker should renew his visit with a skeleton key and dark lantern to profit by the observations he had made upon the premises to which she had so rashly granted me admittance: —

Excessively amused by the terrors I had created, it was partly with a view of ascertaining the exact nature of poor Martine's impressions, that I put myself into a *calèche de remise* the following day (the weather was too hot for riding), and made the best of my way to Les Epines; and a disagreeable way enough, — huge

wheels of stone quarries replacing, on either side the road, the stripped-up elms which constitute the usual avenues of the Parisian environs.

But towards Bourg la Reine and Sceaux, the landscape becomes prettily broken into villas. Of these, Les Epines pleased me most; as of somewhat a more ancient date and character than the little Italianized buildings stuck in the midst of unsheltered flower-gardens, constituting the *beau idéal* of such *campagnes;* for, to a Parisian, any abode surrounded by a sufficient quantity of rose-trees, dahlias, and China-asters, is a country house.

The grounds enclosing the residence of Monsieurs Des Auliers, on the contrary, instead of depending for shade upon arcades and *bosquets* of clipped hornbeam, — the *charmille*, of which the whole verdure is exterior, so dear to the French, — were, on the contrary, English in design, and English in the neatness of their keeping up. — An abundance of evergreens and Amercian plants adorned the shrubberies; and though, fronting the house, the customary arrangement of fine old orange-trees in boxes, assigned some degree of formality to the lawn, the delicious fragrance they diffused, pleaded, at that moment at least, a sufficient apology.

On glancing further, the eye detected immediate confirmation of Martine's assertion, that Monsieur was a distinguished horticulturist. Never did I see such a display of flowers! And the song-birds of the neighbourhood seemed to be quite of my opinion; for the blackbirds and thrushes were whistling in the *bosquets*, at a rate which reminded me that the lateness of my breakfast-hour had somewhat too long deferred my setting off. If I did not want to interfere with Monsieur Des Auliers' dinner, my visit must be a short one.

He was at home. But the servant, attired in what in England we should call a shabby livery, who ushered me into the house, informed me that he must seek his master in the grounds; which gave me an opportunity of carefully examining — what I was entering for the first time — a French house, inhabited by people *genuinely French.*

Though the *jalousies* were closed, so as to temper the atmosphere most agreeably for a day so sultry, I saw that the *parquet* was so highly dry-rubbed as to endow it with the appearance, and almost the coolness, of marble. The furniture and hangings were of plain green silk, which served to throw out the effect of two or three fine pictures adorning the walls; a splendid marine view, which I then fancied to be Stanfield's, and was afterwards taught to admire as by Gudin; a fine burgomaster-looking old head, of the Meervelt or Janssen's school; and opposite (though forming a pendant as inappropriate as some I had found at Wrottesley Hall), the "portrait of a gentleman" as one used to see them at Somerset House, full fig in a militia uniform and as stiff as a ramrod, with a jolly red-and-white face, — a picture unmistakeably English in subject and execution.

"The vulgar father of the lady of the house!" thought I, remembering Martine's assertion that she was an Englishwoman.

But what was my surprise, on turning to the fourth compartment of the room, to recognize in a water-colour landscape that seemed as little worthy to correspond with the fine oil painting opposite, as the militia captain with the grave old elder in his *rabat* and robes, a tolerably correct view of Hawley Chase! This indicated a far greater intimacy between the proprietor and my old friend, than mere patent-plough associations; and I was beginning to feel eager for the arrival of my host, that my curiosity might be gratified.

At present, however, saving myself and the summer breeze sweetened by the fragrance of a bed of heliotropes under the window, the room remained empty; — *too* empty I thought; so formal was the arrangement of the large green *fauteuils* and sofas, framed in white and gold, discreetly ranged along the walls. In the centre of the room stood a round table of *marqueterie;* overhung by an old fashioned *girandole* of rock crystal. But there were no comfortable lounging chairs, no books lying about, no portfolios of engravings, no little tables covered with nothings, no signs, in short, of habitation! It was in the strict

sense of the word, a "withdrawing room;" a room to which the inhabitants repaired after dinner for the enjoyment of conversation. For in France people *do* meet to converse, as though it were a sufficient pleasure.

At all events, there was no denying that this simple chamber, into which the winds of Heaven were freely admitted, was a fresher summer retreat than a morning room in an English country house; stuffy with Axminster carpets, curtains of damask, and hangings of flock paper; encumbered in all directions with superfluous furniture and littered by myriads of pretty trifles, which a current of air such as I was enjoying, would blow away.

I was just, in short, beginning to feel myself at ease in Monsieur Des Auliers' house, when its master himself made his appearance; an appearance somewhat at variance with my preconceived notions of country pursuits. Instead of the light jacket and straw hat, in which an English garden-lover is usually found in the month of July, the old gentleman was habited in black from top to toe, with silver shoe-buckles, a white cravat, and a countenance at once serious and cheerful; looking very much like a German rector, or an English physician in thriving practice.

My original guess, however, was so strongly confirmed by his appearance, that when, on my delivering my letter, he inquired with formal interest after the health of "Sire Hawley," I could hardly refrain from inquiring, in reply, after that of "the crops!" —

CHAPTER XXI.

Whatever choice doth bring a joy unstained
Unto the soul, if rightly understood,
Is one more ingot to our fortune gained,
Is wisdom to the wise, — good to the good. B. C.

Before I had been five minutes in the room with Monsieur Des Auliers, I saw he was a man as little to be joked with as the Master of Trinity. Though his formal bow had been followed by a cordial shake of the hand, it did not place one at one's ease; *and no sooner* was I seated opposite to him in one of the stately

arm-chairs, than the French, which the *attachés* of the English embassy had assured me was excellent, oozed from the tips of my fingers, like the courage of Acres; and I felt myself looking like a blockhead!

Had Hampden or some other of my Cambridge confederates been at hand, we should probably have got up a laugh at the expense of the old gentleman's ceremoniousness. But, unsupported by my brother numskulls, my English shyness nailed me to my place. I could not have felt more uncomfortable if confronting the Lord Chief Justice!

"Sire Hawley," he said, "had done him a great favour in procuring him the honour of my visit." And while he satisfied himself by minute inquiries that my journey had been without accident, I trembled lest his next interrogation should bring to light that I was delivering in July a packet consigned to me in April.

In order to forestal his question, I blurted out another. "How many years had elapsed since he last saw Sir Robert Hawley?"

"I never saw him in my life, Sir," was the somewhat surprised reply; "and, strange to say, poor Albertine is in the same situation."

Albertine was, of course, the English wife. — Her name, at least, did not announce it.

"I regret," he continued, "that her absence from home will prevent her thanking you for the long and doubtless interesting letter, under cover to myself, which you have been the means of conveying. For some time past," added he, with a grave expression of countenance, "the conduct of Sire Hawley towards her has been most kind and conciliating. Yet it is many months since he wrote last!"

My conscience smote me! — He was probably still awaiting an answer to the epistle of which I was the bearer.

"Albertine dines in Paris to-day," said he. "Once a week, throughout the summer, she allows herself the recreation of the opera; where she has a place in the box of her aunt, Madame de Valmoré."

"I understood Sir," said I, "from your servant in the Rue des Tournelles, that, once established in the country you seldom revisited Paris?" —

"Never, to sleep; — but even after the opera, it is easy to be at *Les Epines* by midnight. I am grieved, however, you should have been troubled to visit our remote quarter of the Marais, — which not a soul of your country-people ever deigns to penetrate, unless occasionally some enthusiast, on a pilgrimage to the old mansion of Madame de Sévigné."

"The Hotel Carnavalet?—Yes! I remember my valet de place suggesting it to me" — I was about inadvertently to add "last May;"—but covered my embarrassment by observing that "I was not surprised he should adhere to a part of the town containing residences of far finer proportions than those now daily arising."

"Yes, — the Place Royale has its advantages," he replied, with a benignant smile; "and having no son to rally me out of my affection for the old-fashioned mansion which has been the abode of my family for the last two centuries, — (for the original of that picture," he continued, pointing to the old fellow I had taken for a burgomaster, "built it even before Madame de Sévigné and her celebrated neighbour of the Hotel de Lamoignon inhabited the district,) I have been allowed to remain a bourgeois du Marais!" —

I replied by inveighing against the mean dimensions of the new streets in the environs of the Tuileries; which, by the lowness of rooms, seem wholly composed of entresols, and where, in spite of exterior carving and redundancy of decoration, all is paltry and unstable.

"Since you are fond of a noble style of architecture, I should like to show you the loftiness of our reception-rooms in the Rue des Tournelles," rejoined Monsieur Des Auliers; "that you might carry away a better impression of our homes and hearths."

"If they differ as much from the apartments in the Quartier de la Madeleine as *Les Epines* from the villas of Suresne and Ville d'Avray," said I, as courteously as might be, "I can easily *judge of them by comparison.*"

"Comparison, but not analogy," replied my host. "This house was built by my grandfather, about the year 1750: the house in Paris by *his* grandfather, the celebrated Président Des Auliers, whose portrait hangs yonder: — both lawyers of eminence. My family, as you are aware, is essentially a *famille de robe.*" —

What on earth should I know about his family! The only member of it who in the slightest degree moved my curiosity was the invisible "Albertine."

"Having learned from your coachman (whom I took the liberty of ordering to put up his horses as I came in) that you intended to dine by and by at Sceaux, and return to Paris in the cool of the evening," observed my host, "I venture, Sir, to hope that you will risk a share of my bad dinner, as no worse than the *gargotte* you thought of attempting."

It was in vain I burst into a flood of excuses, apologies and denials. None were accepted. The old gentleman had forestalled the pretext of an engagement at Paris; so dine with him I must, — though no Albertine was forthcoming, and it wanted several hours of my usual appetite!

"Our dinner hour is five," said he; "in Paris, to accommodate ourselves to the hour of the theatres, which we constantly frequent though living at so great a distance; in the country, because, after dinner, one or two of my neighbours are in the habit of dropping in for a stroll in my gardens, and to enjoy *la causette* with Albertine."

A pleasant prospect for a man shy of speaking French before strangers! But my awkwardness having deprived me of all power of resistance, half an hour afterwards, I found myself seated at table beside Sir Robert's correspondent, with two other quizzes of elderly gentlemen; who, as he informed me, were good enough to keep him company whenever the opera or some other engagement carried off Albertine to Paris; and I doubt whether *Ninette à la Cour* felt half so *gauche* as I in presence of three antediluvians with whom I had not an idea in common; and in whose eyes I was doubtless as curious an animal as any, either stuffed or breathing, in the collection at the Jardin des Plantes.

An untravelled Englishman — the most prejudiced, perhaps, as well as the most *banal* of the Almighty's creatures, — is sure to denounce as ridiculous every custom of foreign countries differing from those of the Smith and Johnson class of his own. *I*, accordingly, set it down as ridiculous that the old gentlemen drew their napkins through their button-holes, and ate their cutlets without a fork; — that the two servants in attendance helped the soup and *entrées*, and left the wine undecanted. At first, I missed my sherry, and missed my champagne. But I was not slow in discovering the Burgundy to be so ripe, the Bourdeaux so fragrant, and the Pouilly to have issued from so cool a cellar, that Charles Roxborough himself need not have grumbled.

Even the fare, though what a professed English dinner-giver would have considered disgracefully scanty, was so hot and well served, that I did not once recall with regret the richer *menu* of Véry; and when the fruit was placed on the table for dessert, had not a plate of Gruyère cheese answered to one of apricots that might have lain for their pictures, could almost have fancied myself seated at some good man's feast, in one of the Ridings of my own Yorkshire.

A glass of very fine old Lunel having been assigned to each of us, Monsieur Des Auliers, who had been vainly trying to hook me into conversation all dinner time, invited me aside with a smile "to do things in the English fashion;" and having filled his glass with the utmost solemnity, proposed "the health of Sire Hawley."

The name seemed familiar to his two guests, for they were preparing to drink it unquestioning; when the younger of the two, with an air of old-fashioned gallantry, added —

"Sire Hawley, — *et sans oublier Madame Hawley.*"

The combination of the two names instantly brought to my recollection the name of Albertine as pronounced by the comely *suivante* in the Rue des Tournelles. — "Madame Aulay was doubtless Madame Hawley!" and the mystery was developed at once. The interesting widow of Sir Robert's grandson, described *to me by Dr. Temple*, was probably the daughter of my host.

Sir Robert's injunction to me to deliver the letter to Monsieur Des Auliers with my own hand, was thus accounted for.

Though he carefully refrained from alluding to his son or grandson in conversation with even his nearest friends, he was probably desirous to learn from one on whose veracity he could depend, some account of the only surviving being with whom they were connected.

What would I have given for means of acquainting my host of my sudden enlightenment, without admitting how thoroughly I had been previously in the dark!

I fancied I had done the thing to perfection by adding to the toast proposed, a stupid avowal of my regret that it should be the absence of "*Madame sa fille,*" which procured me the honour of drinking her health.

"You are under a mistake," replied he, with an indulgent smile, "I was never married. Albertine is only my niece — my niece and heiress," added he more gravely. "Her mother, my only sister, died at Pisa; where Mr. Hawley, who had long been residing abroad on uneasy terms with his father, was also in search of health. In a land of strangers the two foreign families became intimate; *so* intimate, that before the winter was over, the son and daughter were affianced, and in the course of the following summer, united. Fortunately, perhaps; — for neither my poor sister nor Mr. Hawley was fated to see another spring. But, alas! my dear Sir, when the young couple came to visit me in Paris, in deep mourning, on their way to England, to seek reconcilement with poor Wrottesley's grandfather, (according to the wishes expressed by Mr. Hawley, on his death-bed,) I discerned, in a moment, the germs of hereditary disease fast ripening in his frame. Within six months, Sir, he died — died under my roof; — and my poor Albertine, now doubly forlorn, was left alone in the world!"

"You should not dwell upon these melancholy retrospections, my dear friend!" interposed the elderly gentlemen, his guests, on perceiving that he was becoming deeply affected.

"They ought not to appear melancholy to *me*;" he resumed, "since my niece's untimely widowhood has been the means of

procuring me the most delightful companion that ever old bachelor was blessed with! Her residence in my house has taken twenty years off my shoulders. Thank heaven, I know when I am well off! Ask my friends here," added he, addressing me, and glancing at his two companions, "whether I am not the youngest old fellow in the Commune of Sceaux!"

Of course, he received the confirmation he had prepared me to expect.

"The fact is," he continued, "that my poor sister, though an amiable creature, was *avant tout* a woman of fashion; and not even her love for me would have induced *her* to live so far in the wilderness as the Rue des Tournelles! Albertine, however, felt herself in too desolate a position to be quite so fastidious. Recoiling from the idea of crossing the sea to ask hospitality of the proud old man, who, after disinheriting his son for a *mésalliance*, was so stanch in his resentment that his young grandson Wrottesley lived and died without so much as seeing his face, — she was grateful when I clasped her to my heart, and bad her remain there for ever!"

"Sir Robert Hawley, Sir, has been the only sufferer!" said I, fancying that some comment was expected of me.

"I believe he sincerely regrets my niece's determination," said Monsieur Des Auliers. "At the period of his son's death, negociations were already on foot to effect a reconciliation between them. But at seventy years of age, Sir Robert seems to have contemplated the death of a man of five and forty as a remote contingency; and was so conscience-stricken at having allowed his son to go out of the world without the revocation of his paternal malediction, that when poor Wrottesley followed him to the grave, in consequence, it was supposed, of too close an attendance upon his sick-bed, his grandfather regarded this last bereavement as an act of divine retribution!"

"And it may have been so!" was the solemn rejoinder of one of his gray-headed companions.

"*At all events*, as the news of his grandson's death reached *him at the very moment* he was prepared to fold him in his arms,

restore him to the enjoyment of his fortune, and place him at the head of his establishment, the blow fell doubly heavy!"

"About three years ago, was it not? —" said I, recalling to mind the dispirited air of poor Sir Robert, in his deep mourning, when I first visited Hawley Chase.

"Thereabouts. It is nearly a year since Albertine left off her weeds."

"And *she*, even now, not two and twenty years of age!" ejaculated Monsieur Des Auliers' sympathising old friend.

"To look at her, one would scarcely assign her even that!" said her uncle. — "Fortunately, the letter addressed by her father-in-law from his death-bed to old Sir Robert, recommended her strongly to his affection."

"Affection? — pretty affection! What can one think of a father, who goes through life estranged from an only son, to punish him for a few pardonable acts of boyish prodigality," exclaimed the less loquacious of the two old gentlemen, forgetting how recently he had filled his glass to the health of "Sire Hawley."

"Admit *mon cher*," remonstrated our host, "that the liberality of his conduct towards Albertine, has made all the amends in his power? On finding that my niece had married without *a contrat de mariage*," continued he, as if for my edification, "and that her inheritance from her mother was inconsiderable, (her father, a noble soldier, having been ruined by the downfall of the Empire), he made a voluntary settlement on her of a sum of fifty thousand francs a-year (two thousand pounds, annually, I believe, of English money), not even revokable in the event of a second marriage."

"A noble dowry, certainly!" cried both the old men. But I, who knew the extent of Sir Robert's property, and the limitation of his personal expenditure, could only faintly reiterate the word "noble."

"Just what he ought to do!" said I. "All I regret is, that he should not enjoy an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Mrs. Hawley."

"You will be far more strongly of that opinion, I can tell you,

young gentleman, when you have enjoyed one yourself!" cried the more talkative of the two elderlies. "So lovely a creature was never seen; — so excellent, never overlooked, and made others overlook, that she was a perfect beauty."

"Come, come, come come!" cried Monsieur Des Auliers, as the servants at that moment re-appeared with coffee and liqueurs. "You will induce Monsieur Wrottesley to give so exaggerated an account to his friend, Sire Hawley of my niece's perfections, that I shall have him claiming her at my hands. And then, what will become of your poor old friend?" —

A cup of the hottest coffee and a glass of the best white curaçoa I ever tasted, closed our repast; and after a leisurely stroll through the delicious gardens, in which Monsieur Des Auliers (who had by this time acquired considerable interest in my eyes,) did not inflict his greenhouses, and tanpits, and forcing houses upon me half so painfully as might have been expected from a prize-flower grower, — we gradually wound our way home again, and found seats placed ready for us between the orange trees and the house; a spot which the old man denominated with some partiality, his "*salon d'été.*"

Here, as we sat and talked, two or three gentlemanly men dropped in, as though it were their evening custom; to whom I was in turn presented by name. By the whisper that followed, as soon as each in succession could get the old gentleman aside, I saw that my name of "Monsieur *Wrottesley*" instantly suggested me as a kinsman of Albertine's husband, who, it seems, was named Wrottesley after my own godfather; — not without hope, perhaps, on the part of his father that he might eventually succeed to the estate of his heirless old neighbour. But I set their whispers at defiance. In a house inhabited by a Hawley of any description, I felt more or less at home; more particularly now that we were enjoying the clear obscure of a delicious summer twilight, brightened only by a star or two twinkling over our heads, like brilliants spangling the high-domed sapphire vault: while the cheerful murmur of a rural population reached us at intervals from afar, through an atmosphere embalmed with *orange blossoms.*

Considering that the united ages of the party (as the Morning Herald would say of some village tea-drinking, failing the overland mail and foreign intelligence extraordinary) amounted to three hundred and twenty years, it is surprising how quickly I found myself at the close of an evening, which possessed so few of the elements that lend wings to the lagging hours.

Though compelled by the pertinacity with which the elderly friends took leave of our host as the clock struck ten, on pretence that it was his usual hour for retiring, to ask for my carriage and take my departure, long before there was a chance of the opera-frequenting lady making her appearance, I will not pretend that, the whole way back to Paris, I did not start up from the reverie in which I lay reclining in the corner of my *calêche*, whenever the sound of coming wheels announced that a vehicle was approaching.

We met but four, however; a *coucou*, the Bourg la Reine gondole, a heavily-freighted southward-bound diligence, and a hybrid something between a *patâche* and a *maraîcher's* cart, — neither of which was likely to contain a lovely widow rejoicing in an income of some thousands per annum; and though the light emanating from the pearl-grey sky was decidedly insufficient to enable me to distinguish blue eyes and hazel, black locks and auburn, I felt inexpressibly disappointed when, the lights of Paris becoming visible, I saw that all chance was lost.

How, in fact, was it possible for me to be otherwise than interested in Mrs. Hawley, — young, beautiful, amiable, accomplished, wealthy, and closely connected with the person living from whom I had received the greatest obligations! Even the least speculative of my readers will probably admit that Newton himself, or Barême, or Walkingham of the Tutor's Assistant, might have been tempted to superstruct Castles in the Air on such foundations of ivory and gold!

Justified or not, I own I thought of nothing but "Albertine!" — Doctor Temple had been the first to name her to me, as "young Hawley's interesting widow." But I well remembered once, when pointing out to Sir Robert the necessity for urgent repairs at the Chase, and assuring him that, if he set about restoring Wrotles-

ley Hall, I would send, in return, workmen to scrape the moss and lichen from the *façade* of his house which was beginning to resemble in complexion that filthy rustic dainty, a sage cheese,—he replied, in a voice broken by emotion,—"Nothing shall be done to the old place, so long as it is fated to shelter only its aged master. Were my poor grandson's widow ever tempted to come and visit me, then, indeed,—" he did not finish his sentence; but turned away to conceal his tears.

I had, therefore, confirmation strong, that the gentlemanly old Frenchman who had afforded me such unostentatious hospitality, did not exaggerate her merits; and a greater philosopher than W. W. scarcely escaped from his teens, might have been excused for allowing an oath or two to escape his lips, while reflecting that, had he delivered the letter he was charged with at the proper time and place, his acquaintance with the fair widow would have been of three months' earlier date; at all events, that had he chosen to visit Sceaux on any but an opera night, he need not have been on the *qui vive* for a glimpse of her fair face, in a *coucou* or *maraîcher's* cart.

But, as I was now beginning to discover, I was born, like too many others, under the influence of the fairy Guignon; blest with advantages I knew not how to make use of, or making use of them at the wrong moment:—*cherchant*, as the Italians say, *midi à quatorze heures;* — eating my fruit green, or hoarding it untouched till it was mouldy.

So much were my fancies at present engrossed by the image of this youthful beauty, so fair, so ill-fated, wrecked upon the threshold of life, yet submitting so angelically to the decrees of Providence,—that I not only refrained from taking my customary ice at Tortoni's that night, and even from a visit to Frascati then the height of the fashion; but, for the first time since I quitted England, retired to rest without having previously cast my eyes on a certain sketch, which for a year past I had preserved in the secret portfolio of my travelling desk; a sketch which I had stolen from Charles Roxborough, though, I suspect, perfectly with his knowledge and consent; representing his two sisters in the characters of *Minna* and Brenda. It had been made in the fly-leaf of

his betting book, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, when on a visit to their neighbour, Courtfield of Courtfield, to paint his picture for the Guildhall of York; and from the fidelity of the likenesses, and unspeakable grace of the grouping, might have dispensed with the initials "T. L." in the corner, which announced it as the work of a master hand.

Since I became an exile, that little sketch had been a relic for my worship; — a something holy to recall me to my better hopes for this life and the next, from the influence of maddening orgies, such as Paris alone supplies; orgies that sow the seeds of vices, which, like Jonah's gourd, spring up into maturity in a night. But I wanted no amulet after my visit to Les Epines! The impressions I had received *there*, sufficed for my protection.

Next morning I woke, and found the visions of the preceding night still haunting my pillow! Naturally enough, I began the day by turning over again in my mind, from first to last, every page of the Des Auliers' chapter; over again, and over again, and again, for the last time; till, as usually occurs from too much stirring of a shallow soil, all continuity of surface disappeared. Black became white — white black; till what, at first, I thought so fair, grew ugly as the very deuce! —

In the first place, what business had Sir Robert to entrap me by a poor subterfuge into making acquaintance with his grandson's widow? when, by addressing his letter to her uncle he was likely enough to have betrayed me into paying the visit in gaiters, in a blouse, in a hackney-coach, or any other ignominious seeming? — In the second, what business had Monsieur Des Auliers to lay violent hands upon me, at first sight, and insist on my dining at his house? As became a person who piqued himself on being lynx-eyed and mole-eared, I could discern mischief lurking even under the hospitable folds of a table cloth! —

But above all, what business had this peerless Artemisia of one-and-twenty, to be at the opera? If residing with her uncle at the citizen's villa he fancied a country seat, why desert the fragrance of his orange-trees and melody of his nightingales, to encounter suffocation in a crowded theatre; for the pleasure of seeing half-naked men and women fling about their legs, or

shriek like a chorus of brazen axle-trees? If this were not profanation, if this were not an utter desecration of the decencies of widowhood, might I never taste the musky Chambertin of her uncle again!

Such of my readers as are still young enough to remember the variable temperament of their one-and-twentieth year, will perhaps discern in these transitions the first shivering fit of a fever, *i. e.* the first caprice of incipient love. *I* fancied myself, however, far more disposed towards disgust; and when, two days afterwards, I received a billet, signed in delicate *pattes de mouche* with the name of Albertine Hawley, thanking me in all the warmth of French phraseology for "having brought the most welcome of letters, and entreating me to compensate her for her ill-fortune in being absent from home at the moment of my visit to Les Epines by an early return," I indulged in an audible exclamation of "humbug!" and thrust the letter into a drawer; resolved to vouchsafe no manner of answer. Had there been a fire in the room, indeed, it would have instantly disappeared in the flames! —

"For, after all," as I observed to myself half a dozen times in the course of the day, "was I bound to repair Sir Robert Hawley's neglect of his grand-daughter-in-law? Because he had not chosen to place her at the head of his establishment at Hawley Chase, was I to go through the penance of swallowing the dust of the Sceaux road in the dog-days? Should I, in my own country, have dreamed of mustifying myself by a humdrum dinner in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields or Bloomsbury Square? And why must a family of French lawyers needs be better company than those of Gray's-Inn Lane? — No, no! Good eating and good wine were too readily attainable in Paris to inspire patience with the stringy *fricandeau* and greasy *épinards* of a *cuisine burgeoise*."

Tom Whichcote himself, in short, could not have been more insolent or more ungrateful!

CHAPTER XXII.

Prepare to answer
A stormy adversary — an inhuman wretch
Incapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy. SHAKSPEARE.

THE following post brought me a letter in Sir Robert Hawley's hand-writing, which I had scarcely courage to open, so fully was I prepared for reproaches touching my neglect of his urgent commission. I pictured to myself his sober *exposé* of the numberless evils which might have arisen from my non-delivery of a confidential letter, which, for aught I knew, might contain a large sum of money; which, as I *did* know, contained words of kindness, dearer than gold.

With my usual aptitude for shrinking from disagreeable sensations, accordingly, I laid the epistle of remonstrance aside, to tear open one from Charley Roxborough; when, to my surprise, a scrap of paper, scrawled over in my own scarcely legible handwriting, dropped from the envelope. But so carefully was my signature in full attached to the document, that I nothing doubted it was some "promise to pay" which I had neglected; of which Charley, as my honorary factotum, was commissioned to remind me.

After a deliberate perusal, however, and close consideration of the promise it purported to substantiate, I was almost inclined to doubt the evidence of my senses; and I turned the paper round and round, and held it up to the light, to satisfy myself that no forgery had been practised; that the signature was not only my own writing, but attached to the identical engagement to which it was superposed. And alas! there was no disputing its authenticity. Wholly as the fact had escaped my memory, I had certaintly signed the paper; which solemnly pledged me to nominate to the living of Rainham, whenever it might fall vacant, a person to be suggested by my friend, Charles Edward Roxborough, Esq.! —

Having failed in my hope of finding the document what I had ventured to call Mrs. Hawley's note, "mere humbug," I next examined the date; trusting, for my own consolation, to find that

it was later than my formal promise to Sir Robert; in which case, the priority would hold in favour of the latter. But no! It was dated within a year of my being entered at Cambridge,—namely, from Glenhama; and the name of Lord Fortrose was subscribed as a witness. This indeed afforded some clue to the mystery; for I knew that, when first introduced to the fiery whisky of the Highlands, I was accused of having comitted extravagances without name, and performed exploits which have passed into a proverb on the moors; and in the frenzy of some drunken frolic I had doubtless been induced to sign this fatal engagement.

But what was I to think of the cunning of Charles Roxborough, who, from that day to the present, had never once reminded me of my pledge?

"Yours is not a memory that ever requires jogging in pecuniary matters, my dear Wrottesley," ran the letter in which my promise was enclosed. "But as I find the poor old Doctor at Rainham is on his death-bed, it may not be amiss to call your attention to the nature of your engagements concerning the advowson. As the concession was granted as a token of gratitude on your part for what you chose to consider an act by which your life was preserved, (swimming out into the Glenhama Loch to pick you up when you were mad enough or drunk enough, to take out the coble with an equinoctial blowing full in your teeth!) I am satisfied you will be as glad to redeem your word as it was then thankfully accepted.

"I will not fail to let you know when the old gentleman's taper is finally burnt out. At present, I have no news, good or bad; except that money is as scarce in London as the Pitt diamond, and that I am ever, my dear Wrottesley,

"Yours faithfully,

"C. E. R."

"P. S. Hampden is regularly cleaned out. — The mighty Earl his father paid four thousand for him last week, after taking his bond (that is his word) never to set foot in Graham's again; and the poor boy has been packed up in the family waggon, with the *trunks and batterie de cuisine*, to be forwarded to their country

seat; there to remain till the crack of doom, or till, as his father says, he grows wiser."

Though relieved by the information conveyed in this flighty epistle from all apprehension that Sir Robert's letter related to the Des Auliers' affair, I was more than ever reluctant to break the seal. I knew every word the letter contained! Like Charley's, it came to inform me of Dr. Redcross's fatal illness, and remind me of the solemn promises contingent on his death; with a fling or two at the delinquencies of Andrew Grove, and the suggestion of some unimpeachable guardian for the glebe and twelve thousand souls of Rainham! —

Wrong again, by Jove! — My anticipations attained not half the truth! —

"I am convinced that it is needless to remind you, my dear young friend," wrote Sir Robert, "of the pledge you were induced to offer in exchange for the service I was so happy as to render you by clearing off your Cambridge accounts. I will not conceal from you, dear Harry, (for I am eager to open my heart, in order to secure your confidence in return) that at the time I made the stipulation, it purported solely to create a safeguard against the inferior connections forced upon you by the less prosperous fortunes of your boyhood; feeling by no means secure that your insidious friendships of Eagle House might not supply some other farmer's or tradesman's son to fill the vacancy luckily created by the worthless conduct of young Grove." (Poor Andrew!)

"But as things have turned out, I have doubly reason to applaud my forecast. My poor friend, your late revered godfather, had, as I once hinted to you, pledged himself to Dr. Temple of Wrottesley, to bestow this living on his younger brother. But as his will made no allusion to the circumstance, and the promise was simply verbal, the good Doctor had too much sense and delicacy to prefer the claim; and the earnest entreaties of Sir Gratian Roxborough, (indignant at the young man's pretensions to the hand of his daughter,) rendered impossible my interfe-

rence. For Sir Gratian is an old neighbour, — a kind friend in former years to my poor, poor son! — and I was unwilling to assist in mortifying his declining age.

"Last week, however, as soon as the news transpired in the county of Doctor Redcross's apoplectic seizure, I was waited upon by Archdeacon Roxborough, — a coarse man, Harry, but a conscientious, — who afforded me further insight into the Temple affair. His young cousin, he assures me, (the one you thought so prepossessing) is so seriously attached to young Temple, that nothing but conviction that the match would ruin his college prospects, prevented her from giving him her hand on the day her sister was married to Lord Fortrose. Thanks to the mad improvidence of their smooth-tongued brother, the young ladies, it seems, have not only lost the protection of a decent home, but, by Sir Gratian's foolish confidence in the honour of his son, a considerable portion of their fortunes! — Absolute robbery, is it not? — And poor Car, whose health I grieve to say is seriously impaired, is forced to reside in Scotland with the Fortroses, far from the friends of her girlhood; on the sufferance of a brother-in-law who is too much the friend of Mr. Roxborough to hold a high place in my esteem.

"Of young Temple, on the other hand, the Archdeacon speaks in the highest terms. The moment he was apprized of the gap made in Caroline's fortune, he renewed the offer of his hand. Though his fellowship was nearly all he had to depend on, nothing but the sweet girl's resolute disinterestedness prevented his resigning it at once. On his personal merits, I need scarcely enlarge, for you must have known him at college. But if his pastoral vigilance at Rainham be only half as zealously exercised as that of his good brother at Wrottesley, you may congratulate yourself on two incumbents such as few patrons can boast of. I say 'may,' instead of 'might,' nothing doubting that you will second, with as much pleasure as promptitude, the nomination of, my dear Harry,

"Your affectionate friend,
"and faithful servant,
"Robert Hawley."

And now, what was to be done? I say, what on earth, dear reader, was to be done? On whose forbearance was I to throw myself? From which of the two had I the best chance of consideration? Alas! were Sir Robert even disposed to withdraw his claim, how could I ever forgive myself, while contemplating the sunken eyes and wasted form of Caroline Roxborough, for having withheld the panacea certain to restore the bloom of youth! Poor girl! poor Car! — The being I affected to idolize, as a type of those ethereal spirits whose companionship is to suffice for our immortal bliss, was my selfish levity about to pronounce her doom! —

I scarcely know for how many hours I endeavoured to exhaust my restlessness by pacing up and down my room. But my comings and goings did nothing towards the answers it was indispensable I should despatch by return of post. Not a day was to be lost. Though less versed than many in the tactics of country life, I had seen enough, at various times, to be aware of the ferment which arises in a neighbourhood whenever a living of such magnitude as Rainham falls vacant; and I was desirous of forestalling the discussions to which the smallest demonstrations on the part of Charles Roxborough might give rise.

It was to him, therefore, I first addressed myself, and not in my usual slipshod manner; as when writing to announce that I had lost a certain number of hundreds at play, which, since cost what they would they must be forthcoming at a certain date, — I trusted to his ingenuity to levy; but earnestly and soberly.— For the first time I wrote like a man, because manly feelings were stirring in my heart.

I began by attesting on my word of honour, that I remembered nothing of the engagement he had placed before me. "I must consequently have been drunk," I continued, "when the promise was extorted; and I ask you, in all conscience, whether it was the act of a friend to play upon my boyish weakness in so solemn a matter? The proof that I knew nothing, — absolutely nothing, — of the engagement in question, is, that I subsequently pledged myself in a contrary sense to my guardian, in an agreement witnessed by the solicitor to the estate.

"That neither the one nor the other is binding on a minor, I am fully aware. But since compelled by the strait into which you have betrayed me to break my word in *one* instance, I entreat you, Roxborough, not to compel me into an act of gracelessness towards my unfailing friend Sir Robert Hawley; who has asked me this one favour in return for concessions innumerable. You, who are aware by what means I was surprised into signing away my nomination, cannot, as a friend and a man of honour, persist in enforcing your demand. But I do not rest upon the equity of the case. I entreat you, as a kindness for which I shall be ever grateful, to cancel the paper which I herewith return you for the purpose."

As to a further appeal to his feelings in favour of his poor sister, I was beginning to understand him too well to dream of such an act of quixotism. Besides, if even *I* found it difficult to overlook my antipathies to Henry Temple and renounce my last chance of calling Caroline my own in favour of her fond, faithful, and heartfelt attachment, what was to be hoped from her worldly-minded brother, — bent upon establishing his sister at Wrottesley Hall, in the hope of perpetuating round my neck his chain of bondage? —

This disagreeable missive despatched, I persuaded myself that there was no need to answer Sir Robert's letter till I heard again from Roxborough. Better delay till the last moment the annoyance of so unsatisfactory an explanation.

But, strange to tell, my uncertainty concerning Roxborough's intentions shook my own concerning Mrs. Hawley. It was not the moment to risk a second offence against my kind old friend at Hawley Chase. At all events, I would do nothing desperate. There was no occasion to burn my ships. The *billet* of Albertine as well as Sir Robert's letter, should for the present stand over.

All this, however, though easy to write, was far from easy to resolve on. Four or five days must elapse before my mind could be relieved from its misgivings; till when, it would be stupid enough to execute my project of starting for Baden; and who that was ever condemned to a fit of the fidgets in Paris during *the dog-days, but* will compassionate my position! The dust, the

glare, the ill savours that beset me, stimulated my pettishness beyond all bounds.

At that glowing season of the year, when the Parisian is to be found every where but on the banks of the Seine, pursuing his butterfly hunt at Baden, or Aix-la-Chapelle, at Bagnères or Saint-Sauveur — or doing the country gentleman, by angling for gold fish in the marble basin of his château, — the condemned wretches, grilled even to crispness, who remain on the hot *pavé*, consist of stragglers of the royal household, perpetually galloping along the dusty *chaussée* that unites the Tuileries with the grassy lawns of Neuilly; — a few diplomats, unable to obtain their *congé*, and public functionaries, who like the said diplomats, must remain at head-quarters, to keep the pens and ink, which constitute the lamp-of-Vesta of a State, eternally flowing; — and a few stray English, such as are to be met with, disporting themselves like lizards on every sunny wall in Europe; who, on their way to distant watering-places, stop short at Paris, too much relieved by their release from smoky London, to recollect that they may go further and fare better.

But even the placemen and diplomats, with many of whom my intimacy with the English *attachés* had made me acquainted, had daily engagements that disposed of a portion of their day in the snug reteats of Auteuil and Bellevue, the favourite *villeggiatura* of ministers and ambassadors; and I was consequently left to eat a solitary dinner, and deplore the deserted hazard tables of the Salon. The four days of my suspense appeared to have been multiplied by four!

On the fifth, however, while slowly descending the stairs at the Frères Provençaux, to dine in the public room, by way of a fillip to my ennui, I was hailed by Nestor Platicheff, one of the Russian *attachés;* who, affecting an intense Anglomania, lost no opportunity to acquire a taste for dammees and raw meat, by associating with all sorts and conditions of Great British. We agreed, of course, to dine together; and having, in the course of the ensuing hour, talked ourselves into good humour with each other, by a series of the boasts and *blagues*, the lyings and slanderings, by which an empty-headed fellow of twenty

fancies he imposes himself on the world as an Alcibiades, a Rochester, a Lauzun, or a Chevalier de Grammont, we next determined to proceed to one of the theatres.

Away we drove, accordingly, in Platicheff's cab, to the Vaudeville. "*Relâche,*" for some confounded rehearsal! — At the Variétés, neither Potier nor Brunet were to act.

"Why not the opera?" said I, aware that Platicheff belonged to the diplomatic box.

And on his raising some idle objection, a suspicion which rushed into my mind, from seeing him glance at my dress, that he did not care to be seen by his own set in company with one whose *négligé* differed widely from the elaborate *négligé* assumed by foreigners during the summer season, determined me to persist. To the opera, therefore, — though I would far rather have heard a new piece of Boïeldieu's at Feydeau, — to the opera, we went. I forget what was the performance of the night; some horrible mythological screechification belonging to the old repertory — though, for anything I know, the music may have been Glück's, and excellent. But the young men of that day frequented the opera, to chat between the *entrées* of the ballet; finding entertainment during the solos, for which a French audience insists on silence, from a critical study of the audience.

At the close, therefore, of an air divinely sung by Cinti, who still unmarried, was fighting her way to popularity, — I could not refrain from inquiring of my companion, to whom the surface of Parisian society was as familiar as his glove, the name of two ladies occupying a box above the *balcon*.

"Which? — The sallow woman in the lace cap?" —

"— Accompanied by a very fair one, having nothing in her hair, and a single rose in her hand."

"I see, I see!" whispered he, evidently afraid that my misplaced earnestness might be noticed.

"Who are they, then?" — I continued, fancying by his manner, that not to know them argued myself unknown.

"*Que diable!* How should I know!"

"I fancied," said I, a little disappointed, "that you were afraid *of my appearing* interested in some person only too notorious."

"A pretty woman can scarcely be too notorious;" replied the *attaché*. "But when a face so lovely as the one you are pointing out cannot at once be identified, depend on it the owner is not worth an inquiry. I have seen those women here before, but no where else that I remember; so that they must belong, of course, to the *bourgeoisie*."

"That elegant creature with the light hair, a *bourgeoise?*" cried I, with some indignation.

"You have no notion, my dear fellow," cried he, twirling his moustache with an air of insolent *fatuité*, wholly different from a Frenchman's gay impertinence, — "you have no notion what progress has been made in Paris by the *Société de la banque!* Monied people are doing as much for themselves here, as in England. There are two or three houses in the Chaussée d'Antin, which none us of scruple to enter."

"But even there, you say, yonder pretty face is unknown?"

"Utterly! Probably the wife of some *employé* or a retired perfumer of the Rue Vivienne!" rejoined Platicheff, affecting ineffable disgust. "A class of females one is forced to treat with the deference due to their betters; though after all *on y est pour ses frais!*"

Provoked at hearing this impertinence levelled at persons whose appearance was in the highest degree distinguished, I took the earliest opportunity to leave my place; and by lounging along the opposite *couloir*, obtain a glimpse into the box; the door of which, thanks to a degree of heat that caused even the rose held by my *belle blonde* to droop and wither, was likely to be open during the *entr'acte*. Still, I was little the gainer; so sedulously was the space immediately filled by persons eager to exchange a passing compliment with the two ladies; who if unknown to Platicheff, had a large acquaintance among those he had pointed out to me as his friends. By these, they were accosted with a deference of respect wholly at variance with his flippant insinuations.

At the close of the *entr'acte*, I went in quest of one of the English *attachés*, whose red face had been visible for a moment

in the embassy box, and who might perhaps condescend to enlighten me.

While wandering about in search of him, I was startled by suddenly perceiving the objects of my curiosity slowly descending the opposite stair-case; the lady in the cap leading the way, on the arm of a well-known general officer belonging to the household of Monsieur; the younger, the fairer, the more charming of the two, loitering *a little* behind, — perhaps of her own accord, perhaps forcibly detained by the movements of a strikingly handsome young man, on whose arm she was leaning.

They passed so close to me, that the fragrance emitted by her hair or dress was distinctly perceptible. They passed so close to me, that I could almost distinguish the words breathed into her ear by her companion. It might be the effect of imagination, — but I *thought* I heard him whisper, "*Comment! vous retournez ce soir à Sceaux?*

"*A Sceaux!*" — Perhaps to *Les Epines!*

Might not a less active Castle Builder than myself have been pardoned for exclaiming at such a juncture, —

"The widow of Wrottesley Hawley for a thousand!" —

And the widow of Wrottesley Hawley it proved to be! —

CHAPTER XXIII.

Holy St. Francis! What a change is here!
Is Rosaline, that thou didst love so dear,
So soon forsaken? Young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT is a mistake to attribute the sameness of modern life to paucity of incident. Not a human being but could recount, if he chose to relate *verbatim* the story of his life, events as extraordinary as any recorded of the times we are pleased to call romantic. The want of high sentiment to turn them to account, lies in ourselves. A smack-smooth, vapid inanity of character created by the heavy rollers of civilization, by shaping every member of society after the same model, incapacitates us for *taking advantage of* the incidents that present themselves. We

are afraid of being laughed at as raw, new, or vulgar, if we accept with pleasure or surprise any event out of the common line. Were an aerolite to tumble on our heads, we must treat it like a hailstone! —

Though not yet past my nonage, for instance, and a person of no mark or likelihood, I had been myself the hero of adventures, romantic enough for the pages of Mr. Newman's wildest novel. But though the manner in which my noble fortune had reached me was startling enough to have vivified my nature into the ambition of doing it honour, and dealing thankfully with what might be regarded as an especial blessing of Providence, so strong is the influence of vulgar routine, that I had rushed headlong into the vices and weaknesses supposed to be the concomitants of hereditary wealth.

Lest I should not be recognised as worthy to be a pigeon, I had perched myself fluttering my wings on the house-top, waiting to be plucked; so that now, when a few months divided me from the moment which was to have brought me into the enjoyment of independence and eighteen thousand a-year, I was reduced to petty shifts, and prospects of care and privation. Like other children who tear open their rose-buds in the green spring-time, my summer season was doomed to be unembellished with roses.

Still, my philosophy being but skin-deep, I looked forward with stupid resignation to finding on easier terms, in other countries, the pleasures of which I had robbed myself in my own. Even when forced by an accidental view of Mrs. Hawley to admit that the three months and three thousand pounds I had been squantering in Paris, among *croupiers* and *figurantes*, might have been turned to pleasanter account in the society of the beautiful and elegant woman with whom poor Sir Robert had been at such superfluous pains to bring me acquainted, instead of admitting how completely I was below the level of Les Epines, either in a moral or physical point of view, my first idea was to render her duly conscious of the loss she had sustained. Trusting to the impertinence of my *rouéism* to throw a gloss over my previous neglect, I resolved to admit with affected frankness that the letter had been three months in my desk, — shrug my

shoulders, own my delinquency, and plead the *mille et un* fascinations of a city where the pleasures of the day obliterate all thought of yesterday or to-morrow.

On comparing the progress of human folly in the times I have lived in, I sometimes ponder which is the more disgusting — the slang now prevalent, or the fribble-ism in vogue when I was young. Much has been said and written — more then enough perhaps — against fashionable novels; as a wanton waste of human ingenuity in the concoction of what it is a wickeder waste of human time to peruse. But no one can deny that these fictions succeeded in writing down the exclusivism and dandyism of the court of George the Fourth, as completely as knight-errantry was extinguished by Don Quixote.

> Safe from the bar, the pulpit and the throne,
> But touch'd and shunn'd by ridicule alone,

the meretricious frivolities of fashion became loathsome by reiterated exposure, — like the drunkenness held up to shame, by the force of example, for the edification of the Spartan youths.

In my time, a young fellow trusted implicitly for irresistibility to the varnish of his boots, the tie of his cravat, and the parade of his self-sufficiency. But I doubt whether any honourable or right honourable yachter of this present season be capable of fancying, as I did, that, because I had been seen a few times in St. James's Street on the arm of Charley Roxborough, and had given (at his instigation) five hundred guineas for a cab-horse, I had only to ride down to Les Epines, and look Mrs. Hawley out of countenance, to render her conscious of all she had lost by my remissness.

Some suspicion of my deficiencies was at the same time betrayed in my preparing for the visit by recourse to the tailor and hatter, the *bottier* and *chemisier*, recommended by Nestor Platicheff when we dined together at the Frères Provençaux, with the air of compassion with which one flings an alms into a beggar's dish. I consequently made my appearance at last, in all the uneasy glass of novelty, twice as awkward as twice as *trivial as my wont.*

Fictitious autobiographers are apt to fall into the error of describing the state of being in love, as "all compact," definite, and limited as the boundaries of a county traced out in a printed map. Their hero's passion for Sophia is described as succeeding his passion for Clarissa, — not as imperceptibly as Romeo's for Juliet, to Romeo's for Rosaline; but as Scotland succeeds to England, with the Grampian mountains between. But few of those who examine the reminiscences of their own hearts and the incidents of their own lives, will deny that scarcely a given moment of their youth admitted of swearing to a solitary object of attachment. Till the heart throb with that master-passion which impels a man to seek a partner for life by an impulse as overmastering as that which prompts an heroic action, or generates a *chef-d'œuvre*, it is pretty sure to experience a succession of feverish spasms; the commencement of one of which is as hazily interblended with the conclusion of another, as with nocturnal darkness the glimmerings of a summer-day dawn, when "Night is at odds with morning, which is which."

I drove down to Sceaux *very* leisurely, so as not to disturb a particle of my *recherché* costume; and timing my visit to arrive *à la brune* and affect to return to Paris in time for dinner. — I was satisfied that no human face, however lovely, would ever efface from my heart the image of which Lawrence's sketch secured the daily refreshment; and whenever in Byron's glowing pages, some expression of impassioned despondency met my eye, I scored the passage again and again with my pencil till it resembled the gridiron of St. Lawrence, as expressive of the anguish of my own unrequited love. I was even romantic enough to wear enclosed in a medallion ring of black enamel, a shred from a lock of hair which Caroline's designing brother had been careful to leave in my way; and for some time after my second visit to old Des Auliers, persevered in those monkey tricks; with the same volume of Byron lying dog's-eared on my table, and the ring still worn and cherished; though, had I not been the most besotted of novices, I might have known from the first day, that my heart had elected a new idol.

Not because my sleep and appetite were troubled. Not

because, instead of persisting in my eagerness to rush off to Baden and cool myself in the depths of the Black Forest, I was no longer conscious of unusual fervour in the temperature of Paris. But because, by an instantaneous-light process of enlightenment, I had been forced to admit myself a sorry fellow.

If women who, at the utmost pitch of their vanity, appreciate only half their *real* value, did but know the mightiness of their influence over the stronger but more malleable sex, what wonders might they not accomplish! For after all, the victorious coquetry which aforetime sends a man to pick up a glove in a lion's den, or armed a king of France and all his legions to "scour those English" thence, exercised a less potent spell than the gentle smiles of Mrs. Hawley, while lending her indulgent attention to my shallow apologies.

Nothing could be more embarrassing than my self-introduction: — for I found her seated alone, with her work in her hand, under shelter of the old orange trees; while Monsieur Des Auliers and his friends were making the round of the garden.

"I have far too much pleasure in welcoming any friend of Sir Robert Hawley," said she, in reply to my excuses for the tardiness of my visit, "to feel hurt that a first visit to Paris should have supplied him with interests more exciting than a dull walk to the Marais, or a dusty drive to Sceaux."

I had made up my mind to keep to myself my discovery at the opera, and the trouble and five franc piece it had cost me to have her watched into the carriage and the name of its owner ascertained; and presented myself simply as if in reply to her letter. Her own nature, however, was too candid to disguise from me that I was not mistaken in supposing myself to have attracted her notice on the night in question.

While hurrying from the vestibule, on her footman's announcement "*la voiture de Madame était avancée*," I fancied I heard the word "*compatriote*" exchanged between her and her handsome cavalier, whom I fairly wished under its wheels; and *my supposition was* now frankly confirmed.

"I little imagined," said she, "when Count Max de Charney pointed you out to me the other night at the opera, as probably a countryman of my own, that I had so lively an interest in the question."

Though accustomed to profess a prodigious contempt of all things foreign, the notion of having John Bull ticketed upon my person displeased me. But there was nothing in the outward man of the said Count Max on which I could ground an ironical retort; and Mrs. Hawley's manner of speaking was so mild and natural as to disarm animosity.

"I am too proud to hear you admit yourself my countrywoman," said I, "not to feel surprised that Monsieur de Charney should be disposed to renounce his claims in my favour. But in my own country, marriage with a foreigner would scarcely deprive an Englishwoman of her birthright."

"You mistake me. — I am English by birth, as well as marriage!" replied Albertine. "My father and mother were emigrants."

"I ought, certainly, to have surmised that English was your native language," cried I, with more gallantry than truth, — for she spoke it with a pretty little helpless lisp, more charming than the pure enunciation of a Siddons or an O'Neill. "But how are we to forgive your refusing to revisit the land, to which, by a double tie, you are united?"

As she made no answer, restrained perhaps by feelings she cared not to confide to a stranger, — to break the awkward silence that ensued, I began prating about London and its improvements — England and its superiorities — in a style to do honour to the leading article of a country newspaper; flattering myself, of course, that I was repeating the tirade by which my own ears had been dazzled by Charley Roxborough. But, alas! it was only a Birmingham imitation; the *terra-cotta* copy of a marble! —

"Sir Robert Hawley must surely have commissioned you," replied my hostess, "to second his pressing invitation to me to pass next winter with him in England!"

An involuntary smile traversed my features. Cunning old

guardian! How ill-concealed were his matrimonial designs against us both!

"Had he afforded me the least hint of such a project," said I, with a look intended to be killing, "I should have shown myself less lukewarm in the delivery of his letter. But is there the slightest hope of your compliance?"

Without raising her face from the embroidery, which had not left her hand since my arrival, Mrs. Hawley shook her head.

"Though English-born, I am Frenchwoman enough at heart," said she, "to prefer the sight of trees when green, and rivers when flowing. Frozen streams, and leafless woods, would be a poor exchange for the busy hum of Paris, and my uncle's sociable circle."

"I will not pretend that Yorkshire is able to afford the glitter and tumult of Paris," was my piqued reply. "But, as regards sociability, believe me nothing in France — nothing on the whole continent, vies with the cordial hospitality of our country life."

Mrs. Hawley smiled incredulously. But she looked so pretty when she smiled, — her fair ringlets glistened so brightly when she shook her head, and so soft a bloom overspread her almost girlish cheek, that I forgave her for differing from me in opinion.

"You forget," said she, "that *my* notions of England are derived from one who had little reason to think of her with partiality, — my banished father-in-law! — You will find, too, a most unfavourable impression produced on the continent by your Queen's trial. — There was something so base, so un-English, in the system pursued towards her!"

"It would be exacting too much of a King," I retorted, "to expect him to renounce his prerogative on a point where all men play the Sultan when they can; *i. e.* getting rid of a wife they detest — and who deserves to be detested."

"I am not qualified to enter into the question of her merits;" she mildly replied. "That she was a woman, and unfortunate — above all, that she has paid with her life the penalty of her errors — must prevent those of her own sex from casting a stone at her. But the trial formed a ready text for the French, already

irritated against England by the sufferings of the Emperor. I warn you of this, Mr. Wrottesley, only to excuse certain prejudices which you will often find it hard to contend against."

I was about to talk big about taking care that such prejudices did not betray themselves in my presence, when a reminiscence of the high-bred mildness of Count Max de Charney suddenly recurred to my mind, (as a fragrant gale from afar, sometimes reaches one at sea,) which smoothed down my Bobadil demonstrations.

"Even in my own family," added Mrs. Hawley, "which would otherwise be a most united one, national antipathies run high. My uncle, with whom you are already acquainted, is as moderate as becomes every man of enlightened mind. Though he resigned an important post on the accession of the Bourbons, he has thankfully enjoyed the public tranquillity arising from their restoration; and never allows party politics to be discussed at his table. But women are not always so wise, in their generation. My aunt, the Comtesse de Valmoré, who is kind enough to officiate as my chaperon whenever I appear in the world, has a *guignon* against England and the English, which I often find the source of painful moments and embarrassments. A little jealous of my position in this house, she affects never to have forgiven her sister's having united her only daughter with an Englishman; and having no children to occupy her attention, and being, I sincerely believe, affectionately interested in my destinies, what she most apprehends is, that, once acquainted with my poor husband's family, I may be induced to settle in England, instead of forming (as she wishes), a high alliance in this country."

A pretty cool *exposé*, truly, of her family secrets! I longed to whisper to the fair Albertine, how little characteristic of her birth-place was such indelicate reserve. But even *she* seemed to think it wanted apology.

"I apprize you of these facts," said she, "because, as I hope we shall see a great deal of you during your sojourn in Paris, I wish you to be *au fait* to our politics. In every Englishman with whom I converse, Madame de Valmoré beholds an enemy come

to carry off her favourite niece and her brother's fortune, to the country which fought the battle of Waterloo, and denies the infallibility of the Pope."

"You have many English acquaintances, then?" said I, a little disappointed.

"Very few; but only such as I prize;—connections of my poor husband, or persons with whom we became acquainted in Italy. To most of these, my aunt is inexcusably ungracious. There is a Mr. Stormont —"

"Reginald Stormont?" said I, interrupting her.

"Reginald Stormont, — who having renewed his acquaintance with me one night last winter at the English Embassy, was almost insulted by Madame de Valmoré."

"In that instance, at least, she made proof of good taste," was my bitter reply.

"You know Mr. Stormont, then?"

"He is well known to my family."

"In that case you will admit that his social position is unexceptionable?"

"And his conduct as inconsistent as his manners are flighty! But forgive me for inquiring," said I, on perceiving a flush of displeasure tinge her cheek, "why, in your independent position, you subject yourself to the control of one whose tastes and opinions differ so widely from your own?"

"Madame de Valmoré is the only member of my family young enough to mix much with the world," she replied; "and I should be restricted entirely to the somewhat grave society of this house, but for her kindness in serving as my *chaperon*."

"But what possible occasion for a *chaperon?*" cried I. "In England, a married woman would be laughed at for appearing with such an appendage."

"Surely not under such circumstances as mine?" pleaded the gentle widow. "Married before I was seventeen, my widowhood followed so closely, that, till last winter, when my family insisted on inaugurating me into the pleasures suitable to my age, I had never entered a ball-room! What would have become of *one so inexperienced*, had not Madame de Valmoré undertaken

to introduce me into society? And though a somewhat severe duenna, her despotism is kindly intended. In this country," continued the fair Albertine, "a fortune such as mine, with my uncle's inheritance in perspective, creates as many suitors as the beauty of the Venus de Medicis."

Again, the lady's coolness threw me a little out of my perpendicular. All I could stammer in reply was, that "forewarned was forearmed; and that she could be in no great danger from assiduities she knew to be interested."

"In no *danger*," said she, "but often in great embarrassment; on which account, the duennaship of my aunt is an invaluable resource. Pray tell Sir Robert Hawley when you return to England," she continued, with an unembarrassed smile, as, at that moment, her uncle and his venerable *aides-de-camp* appeared at the extremity of the lawn, "that the first *tête-à-tête* enjoyed by his grandson's widow since she became her own mistress, was with the fellow-countryman he recommended to her friendship. It must not be the last, however," continued she, with a winning smile; "for a natural alliance between us seems created by the name of Wrottesley."

What would I not have given for courage to assume, in my reply, the air with which Charley Roxborough leaned into the carriage of the lady whom he had chosen to describe as the widow of an Irish Primate! But Mrs. Hawley's good breeding kept me in check. I should as soon have dreamed of undue liberty with *her* as with one of the stone Victories that guard the Tuileries court-yard. I had not even presence of mind, when the old gentlemen in black shorts and shoe-buckles reached the spot where we were seated, to attempt my premeditated announcement that I must now hurry back to dine at Paris. There was something so little priggish about them, — something so mild and indulgent, — that it would have been an act of pure cowardice to insult the whole Institut and Académie de Lettres in their persons.

Moreover if, at my former visit, regarding me as a little overdressed and a little *super-coquentieux*, they had assumed towards me the dignity of their gray hairs, it was only from ranking me

among the thousand English puppies, who, with their eyes half open, overrun the continent; — squabbling in cafés, and creating disturbances in theatres.— But no sooner had Sire Hawley's letter announced me to Albertine as one of the great landlords of the great county,—in possession of "450,000 *francs de rente,*" a princely revenue, of which in the vast kingdom of France there are perhaps not a hundred examples,—than they began to admire the modesty with which I had made my appearance at Les Epines and entered into the beauties of its scanty flower-plots and an acre or two of luzerne.

I was Kotoo-ed accordingly to the top of my bent. In a country where marriage is "dealt with by attorneyship," or rather exclusively arranged by a couple of families who put two people together by the simple process of putting two and two together, the little conclave of silver shoe-buckles settled among themselves that Sire Hawley was bent upon uniting his grand-daughter's thousands per annum with the thousands per annum of his ward; thereby creating one of the monster fortunes peculiar to English commoners and grandees of Spain. And though such an arrangement would deprive their fireside circle of a being whom even *they* could not but regard as far too fair and bright for her present position, a great *parti* is so dazzling a thing in the abstract, to *bourgeois* eyes, that they were unanimous in their desire to do honour to the young stranger, who was to be the means of endowing Monsieur Des Auliers' niece with *un million de rentes!*

As yet, I had never received full change for my "millions." Except in my own family and among billiard-markers, my consequence had not been fairly acknowledged. Gripham made it his policy to keep me down, — Charles Roxborough his pleasure; while my friend Hampden regarded me as at best a species of *parvenu.* It was therefore refreshing to find every guinea of my rent-roll for once properly quoted, and every shilling of every guinea estimated at its full value. The old gentlemen had lived through too many years of their lives not to know, to the discredit of the proverb, that, as times go, house and land are better *than learning;* or rather, that it is not till house and land are

gone and spent, learning is found to be most ex-cel-lent. The highest annual pension enjoyed by the most erudite *savant* of them all, did not equal my month's income!

Not having dined, however, the fumes of the incense offered to me were insufficient to prevent my yearning after the grosser *fumet* of Véry's soup and cutlets; and it was at least some consolation, when forced by sheer hunger to take leave and go home and dine, that Mrs. Hawley seized an opportunity to acquaint me with the number of her box at the Académie Royale, and that, on Thursday nights, she was a punctual attendant.

It will readily be believed that I drove back to Paris in far better humour with myself than the preceding week. Like Crabbe's hero in the "Lover's Journey," I was already beginning to discern that nothing could be pleasanter or more practicable than the road to Sceaux!

CHAPTER XXIV.

Venez après cela crier d'un ton de maître
Que c'est le cœur humain qu'un auteur doit connaître,
Toujours le cœur humain pour modèle et pour loi!
Le cœur humain de qui? — Le cœur humain de quoi?
Celui de mon voisin a sa manière d'être,
Mais, morbleu, comme lui, j'ai mon cœur humain, moi.

De Musset.

The first day's waking of a new sovereign, or newly-appointed minister, can hardly be fraught with brighter illusions than the first *réveil* of a man under the excitement of a new passion. — Every object he looks upon is viewed through the rainbow-tinted medium of a prism; every breath of air he inhales seems laden with gales from Paradise; every vista into the future appears to terminate in a sunset halo of purple and gold. Poor fool! — What a bewildering holiday of pleasant sights and sounds to diversify his work-a-day life! —

Already I subscribed without reserve to the assertion of the old gentlemen in spectacles, that Albertine Hawley was the most charming person in the world. Car Roxborough was a pleasing, amiable girl, — but decidedly provincial in tone and deportment. The Stormonts, if piquant and pretty, were forward and

affected. While the beautiful and high-bred Lady Margaret Hampden was cold enough to freeze the marrow in one's bones.

But Albertine was not only prettier than the prettiest of them, but high-bred as the haughtiest; uniting the feminine gentleness of poor Car with an airy elegance, — a "grace beyond the reach of art," which nothing but Parisian training ever bestows. She was so prepossessing, — so conciliating, — had at once so much taste and *naïveté,* that one should as soon have thought of finding fault with a flower for its colour, or a bird for its song, as of censuring any thing it pleased her to say or do.

Even qualities which ran some risk of being quoted as defects, in *her* case turned to favour and prettiness. Her hair and complexion, for instance, exhibited a degree of fairness such as an habitual carper might have denounced as insipid. But this total absence of colour served only to enhance the beauty of her large gray eyes, fringed with exuberant lashes and overarched by eyebrows of a pale chesnut; and the full redness of a mouth of such exquisite proportions, that one could have wished it ever closed but for the pearls disclosed by its slightest discomposure, and the pleasant words to which it delighted in giving utterance. I am afraid I am growing a trifle more poetical, dear reader, than beseems the era of steam machinery. But it is difficult to make a sober-suited British public understand the charm of such a creature. Among its wives and daughters are many, perhaps, as fair and good. Not one, — no, not one, — who, being thus good and fair, would stoop as *she* did, and as almost every Frenchwoman will do, to embellish her demeanour by studied suavity, and her person by the nicest care. From head to foot, — from the bend of her salutation to the dimple of her smile, — nothing like defect was perceptible.

Under the influence of the new passion fluttering through my being like the life-blood throbbing in every vein, I could hardly fail to revert with regret to the idiotic prodigality which had so completely emptied my purse. Fain would I have had at my disposal the gold of Ophir and pearls of Ormus, to pave the way *under the feet Albertine.* Instead of which, I could not so much

as command a new equipage to appear at Les Epines in a style suitable to my fortune.

That my renouncement of equipage and show constituted my chief merit in the eyes of its circle, by assigning me the credit of a philosophical greatness of mind very far above my deserts, I was not likely to surmise; and to have held just then in my hand but one of the tens of thousands I had squandered, would have made my heart leap for joy. Even as it was, I was not much to be pitied. Mrs. Hawley's invitation to me to visit her at the opera, in spite of a *revêche* aunt and Counts Max innumerable, had extinguished all my aspirings after Baden. The thermometer might have risen ten degrees, and the crisped leaves of the chesnut trees of the Tuileries been done brown by the heat; and I should still have maintained to Nestor Platicheff and certain others of the northern diplomats, who talked of being iced every morning at Tortoni's lest they should dissolve in the course of the day, that Paris was one of the coolest cities in the world.

It was rather too hot to hold me, however, when, on the morning which was to be crowned by a second evening spent with Albertine, Charles Roxborough's answer to my letter was placed in my hand! Not only did my *soi-disant* friend insist on the performance of my engagement; but informed me that, lest my absence from England should encourage my guardian and his solicitor to interfere in the business, he had already laid the copy of my promise before Sir Robert Hawley.

"Holding your word as sacred as my own," wrote he, "I have long promised the advowson of Rainham to the brother of one of my most intimate friends, who has in consequence relinquished other prospects of preferment; and you must pardon me for refusing to violate a pledge so solemn. I feel a little hurt, my dear Wrottesley, by your suggestion of the mere possibility of such a breach of faith. An honest man's word is his bond."

Nothing, in short, could be more evident than his determination to make me abide by mine. And thus, by no fault of my own, save that of possessing at nineteen years of age a head not Glenlivet-proof, I was to be made the instrument of gross injustice towards young Temple, — of irreparable cruelty to

poor Caroline, — and above all, of mortification and disappointment to the venerable friend whose generous dealings with myself demanded far different requital!

But there was no help for it. Charles Roxborough held in his hands the means of immediate vengeance, should I provoke a final rupture. The Jews by whom for the next six months I must be maintained, were his creatures; while such was the influence in society, of this bland, witty, agreeable, well-dressed man of the world, that he had only to unite the word scamp with my name in certain circles, or even to shake his head with an air of mistrust when I was talked of, to secure my ostracism. In that day, so omnipotent was the influence exercised in club and coterie by one or two of the high priests of fashion, that the throne itself was not secure from an interdict.

But though I saw that the presentation of Rainham was a lost case, I wanted courage to confess it to Sir Robert Hawley. He had often been my father-confessor. I had been forced, on many occasions, to accuse myself of prodigality, vice, and folly. — But I had never failed in my word. And how could I hope that any one who had not witnessed the orgies of Glenhama, nay, who in the course of his well-regulated life, had, perhaps, never been exalted by wine, should credit that my hand could have written what was wholly unrecognized by my mind? Even *I*, could scarcely believe it; and was a greater stretch of credulity to be expected of an indifferent party? At all events, as Roxborough had taken upon himself to apprize the executor of the Wrottesley estate that the living was promised, there was no occasion for an immediate answer. Better redeem myself from *one* delinquency in the eyes of Hawley Chase, by improving my intimacy with Albertine, before I announced this new defalcation!

I suspect I was no loser by the weight overhanging my spirits. I entered the theatre that night as much subdued as by one of Adela Roxborough's brow-beatings; and instead of hurrying to Mrs. Hawley's box, as the preceding night I had lain awake projecting, took my place quietly in my *stalle de balcon;* affecting a deep interest in the *entrechats* of Brocard, only to gain time *and composure.*

Dear ladies — dear English ladies! who have so many little books, tabby-bound, gilt-edged, and didactic, written for your learning, who are taught in sections and chapters by the starched aprons and lawn sleeves of your own sex, how to behave in the capacity of maids, wives, and widows, — how to choose your husbands, in girl-hood, and as matrons, your lump-sugar and sirloins of beef, — how to train your children and your house-maids, so as to spare neither rod nor broom, — who are documented, in short, in plausible common-place, till not a movement of your body, or impulse of your mind, is left to the glorious instincts of heaven's bestowing — forgive an old bachelor for suggesting, among all this load of lectures, a single hint; — frivolous enough, I admit, but let me hope *not* vexatious, which you are entreated to lay to your hearts.

Dear countrywomen, in spite of the time and money you waste upon your toilet, believe me, you are the worst dressed angels in Europe! I hear your *gros de naples* rustle with indignation at the suggestion. — I see your brows knit, and your fair shoulders shrugged to your ears. But if any man save myself dare tell you a word of truth, he would join with me in replying to these peevish demonstrations, — "be as angry as you please; but so it is!"

I know all you can urge; that you are costumed by milliners, dress-makers, shoe-makers, and perfumers, as French as French can be; that Mesdames Laure and Louise, Messieurs Melnotte, Isidore, and Houbigant, supply the dress I do not scruple to denounce as detestable. But if it be for the captivation of the rougher sex you adorn yourselves, trust me, that half your efforts, according to the axiom of Hesiod, would be more than the whole. You do a great deal too much. You gild refined gold, and paint the lily. You overload yourselves with finery, when simplicity should be the order of the day; and unveil a far larger portion of your beauty than it is good to exhibit to eyes profane.

When you protest that from the days of Queen Bess to those of Queen Victoria, your fashions, like your farces, have been "taken from the French," — better say at once mistaken;" for

never was grosser misapplication! The galas of the Court of France occur in January, the *fêtes* of the English season, in June; yet the fashions invented for the glorification of the one, are transferred, errors not excepted, to the account of the other. And what a sorry sight, to behold an English dowager, at a summer drawing-room, sinking under robes of satin and a train of brocade *lamé* with gold, or flounced with heavy *guipure*, her brows fevered by a ponderous turban: — a costume fit for the encounter of frost and snow, rather than for the moment when even the airy blossoms of the acacia and laburnum appear too heavy for the branches whereon they are waving!

In utter insensibility to fitness of time and place, moreover, you, the purest and chastest of Europe's maids and matrons, do not scruple to appear in public theatres, crowded with rabble, (from females to whom it were sacrilege to allude, to the link-boy, who, previous to shouting for your carriage in the street, surveys your charms from the gallery), in the self-same dress devised by its Parisian inventors to exhibit fair shoulders and naked arms, to those privileged by consanguinity of blood and parity of rank, to gaze and to admire; husbands, fathers, brothers, friends, restrained by the reverence of kindred feeling from unseemly comment.

Again, I say, pardon me! I am speaking freely. But all I want, as George I. used to say to his loving subjects, "is your goods." And had you studied, as I have, the exquisite *demie-toilette* of the Parisians, you would admit that the half-high muslin gown, with long sleeves, and the glossy hair without an ornament, in which Albertine presented herself to the recognition of my opera-glass on the night in question, was in far better taste, according to the season and scene of our meeting, than the ponderous trinkets, necklaces, bracelets, combs, and earrings, — the garlands of artificial flowers, and silken dresses, loaded with trimmings, — with which, at that very moment, my mistaken country-women were endeavouring to outshine the gas-lights, in an atmosphere of 90° of Fahrenheit, at the crowded Opera House in the Haymarket.

I admit this tirade to be a digression. But if my readers ever

perused an account of the execution of the gallant Cinq Mars, and thrilled with indignation, when, as the noblest of Richelieu's victims was addressing his salutations to the throng ere he laid his head upon the block, his *valet-de-chambre* thrust into his face, on the point of a lance, his weekly "small account," for shoe-strings, blacking, and pipe-clay, (which the young hero about to be launched into eternity had forgotten to discharge,) they will, perhaps, allow me the plea conceded to the serving-man, that what is acceptable at no time, may as well be tendered at one moment as another.

Of this I am certain; that had any man among my readers, beheld the snow-white freshness of her dress, cool and delicate as a newly-blown white rose amidst its foliage, he would have admitted that its unlustrous surface served to enhance the bloom of her youthful complexion, as much as the modesty of its drapery, the respect of her adorers.

I have often heard my English friends exclaim against the dowdy aspect of the Parisian theatres, and assign the palm of brilliancy to our own. But may it not constitute one among the many causes of the decline of our national drama, that the theatres are *too* brilliant; that people go there to be seen, rather than to listen; that the display in the boxes distracts public attention from the stage, and gives rise to the disturbance of a running fire of discussion.

As I sat gazing from afar off on the spotless beauty of Albertine, muttering between my teeth the words of the old madrigal,

> Have you seen but a white lily blow,
> Before rude hands have clutch'd it;
> Have you seen but the fall of the snow,
> Before the soil hath smutch'd it;

and wondering whether the silvery texture of an angel's wing ever showed more dazzling fair, I could not resist an occasional glance at the prim visage of Madame la Comtesse de Valmoré, in whom I foresaw a dangerous antagonist.

She was a woman of that "certain age" which is the chartered

date of chaperons; richly dressed, and of a countenance more imposing than prepossessing. One seldom sees an Englishwoman of any time of life, exhibit the harsh lines and decided expression of mouth, which impart so disagreeable a character to the thin face of a Parisienne; particularly if a *maîtresse femme*, or the wife of an influential placeman. About such a woman, there is something horribly governmental. "A brow like Mars, to threaten and command" — a cold scrutinizing glance — a compressed lip, indicative of a soul that should have been a tax-gatherer's, and a heart that should have been a surgeon's, — combine with an accurate knowledge of etiquette, and perfect command of countenance and gesture, to render a woman of this description a more stringent visitation than the nightmare.

I had allowed two *entr'actes* to pass without stirring from my place, so great was my awe of Madame de Valmoré's stony countenance; when, just as the third act of the opera of La Vestale was beginning, there glided into the box a man whose face was strange to me, but whose presence could not be strange to its inmates; for after a silent salutation to both, he assumed a seat immediately behind Albertine, and fixed his attention on the stage.

Though not a syllable was exchanged between them, I felt dissatisfied. He was far nearer to Mrs. Hawley than I was content to see any man so young and good looking. Nor had he been ten minutes seated, before my jealous quick-sightedness perceived a deeper bloom overspread the delicate cheek of Albertine; as is invariably the case with a woman in presence of one who holds undue influence over her feelings. Though her attitude was unchanged, and though not a word had been spoken, I could see that she was happier than before. I might have guessed as much! Who but her foolish old uncle, enamoured of his auriculas, ranunculuses, and prize tulips, — who but the chorus of half-witted, purblind, greybeards by whom she was surrounded, — could have imagined that mere love of music would take a woman of her age from her quiet occupations and pleasant *home, to be jolted for* miles and miles over a vile *chaussée!*

As to decyphering in the countenance of Madame de Valmoré *her* dispositions towards the new comer, one might as well have attempted to interpret the marble face of a Sphinx! The less the notice taken of the stranger, however, the more he seemed at home among them, and the greater my displeasure. He was so placed that I could not catch a full view of him. But the profile that protruded from behind Mrs. Hawley's filmy sleeve, was handsome as that of the Antinous.

My curiosity having by this time got the better of both timidity and discretion, the moment the crash of the orchestra signalized the finale of the act, I hurried round the house to make my way to the box; when, just as I reached the last step of the staircase leading to the second circle, a well dressed young man brushed past me, who was either the genius of a whirlwind or the identical individual whom I had just seen seated within seven-eighths of an inch of Mrs. Hawley's graceful shoulder!

On reaching their box, however, his place was not empty; though from the compliments which the individual who occupied it was addressing to Madame la Comtesse, I was confirmed in my belief that he had recently taken his seat.

Perhaps it was to the mollifying influence of those very compliments, I was indebted for the unexpectedly gracious manner in which the chaperon acknowledged my introduction; or, perhaps, she did not care that Prince Zriny, by which name the stranger was addressed by Albertine, should perceive that any man dared venture into her presence who was not entitled to a welcome. It did not much signify. Her civility sanctioned my remaining, — which was all I wanted.

The Prince, I suspect, wanted it as much as myself; for I soon found him to be one of the many merry mountebanks who are lost without the presence of a *plastron* against whom they may exercise their lunging. If in some degree a disciple of Charley Roxborough's supercilious school, he had the advantage over the English exclusive that his impertinence was more amusing. *His* contempts were not conveyed by a mere smile of conscious superiority.

"And how did you like my country?" inquired Mrs. Hawley, who had alreday apprized me by a few words that Zriny, a high-

born Hungarian and one of the Austrian *attachés*, in Paris, had been spending the season in London.

"Above all things!" was his frank reply; "your country needs only to be peopled with my country people, to be delightful. You, *chère* Madame Hawley, who owe your birth and not your breeding to a soil which furnishes the coldest clay of the habitable globe, cannot expect me to be in very enthusiastic ecstacies with the dolls stuffed with bran whom, by courtesy, you call your countrywomen. But I delight in the green suburbs and superb river that vivify your leaden city. Whenever I found my spirits weighed down by loads of lordly magnificence, whether in pragmaticality or plate — speeches or equipages, — away I used to drive to the depths of Greenwich or summit of Richmond Hill, — to refresh my soul by a bath of verdure such as no other country can produce; or by watching the huge Indiamen heave up the Thames, bringing to Cheapside their tribute of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, like the kings of Arabia and Saba, and the princes of Tarsus."

Unprivileged to check his sauciness, the utmost I could do was to distort my indignant features into a sneer *à la* Roxborough, purporting that it was not with *such* views Richmond and Greenwich were usually visited by gallants of his age.

Mrs. Hawley seemed to understand better how to parry his passes; by immediately placing him on what, to a foreigner, is apt to prove inferior ground.

"I think I understood," said she, "that your visit to England was dedicated less to the turf you prize as green, than the turf where to be green is dangerous? Your friends of the English embassy assured me that Epsom, Ascot, and Goodwood were your temptations to cross the channel?"

"And alas! the chief causes of hastening me back again!" exclaimed the *attaché*. "Will you believe that, born and bred among horses on our Transylvanian estates, till I sometimes fancy myself a species of centaur, I believed myself so tolerable a judge, as to trust to my own discernment in making up my book. No one had been kind enough to warn me that every *quadruped entered to run* has five legs instead of four; and that

the fifth leg attached to it, *i. e.*, *the* leg, is the one it runs on! In a word, I was what you English call, 'regularly done.'"

"The turf," I ventured to observe, (though I had better have held my peace, for a man will bear fifty reproofs from a woman where one that issues from whiskered lips is insupportable,) — "the turf is brought, in England, to the perfection of a science; and what man in his senses, would expect to become a first rate chemist or astronomer by the mere force of ambition?"

"I will not pretend to guess your interpretation of the word science, my dear Sir," retorted the Prince, speaking such excellent English in exchange for my indifferent French, that I could have brained him. "But it strikes me that the turf, as at present constituted, is confoundedly more like a trade. My notion of fair betting upon fair racing is, that with a perfect knowledge of the merits of the running horses, no man to whom race-courses are familiar, ought to be far at fault. But it seems that, in England, you must know a horse's owner and trainer as well as its build, wind, and courage, before you can venture to back it."

"In all countries," said I, tartly, "dishonest men are to be found; and the outcasts who, on the continent, become *chevaliers d'industrie*, are apt in England to take to the calling of a black leg."

"And against *such* scoundrels," retorted the Prince, "one is fully on one's guard. But what one does *not* prepare for, what (as one of the equestrian order) I should be sorry to prepare for, — is the roguishness of the friend who, after sharing one's cutlets at the Clarendon or turtle at the Albion, picks one's pockets with as little remorse as the veriest hang-dog born with Newgate in perspective, as much his birthright as the Tuileries that of a Bourbon, or Windsor Castle that of the Prince of Wales."

"With whom can you have been living, my dear Prince," exclaimed Mrs. Hawley, with ill-repressed indignation, "to have imbibed such notions of my countrymen?"

"*D'abord, ma chère dame,*" replied Zriny, "I was unlucky

with the letters you gave me. Your Mr. Stormont was at Malta: — your Sire Hawley was a fossil. The only available introduction I took with me were, first, a line from your ambassador to the Foreign Office, which procured me the worst dinner I ever tasted, and a supper after the opera given by a slipshod Viscountess, a fourth part of whom would have constituted a handsome woman, had she been less flagrantly addicted to small beer."

"Oh! fie, fie, fie!" interrupted the Countess de Valmoré, who had been listening with an air of disgust.

"I appeal to Monsieur," cried the cool Hungarian, looking at me straight between the eyes, "whether such be not notoriously the case?"

And as it was by no means my cue to admit that the politics of West-end fashion were to me more than hieroglyphical, I could only bow my assent to a scandal applying to I really knew not whom.

"My only resource, therefore," resumed the Prince, "was my charming cousin, Princess E., who lives surrounded by every thing that London fashion delights in, — people to whom, as in gratitude bound, I was inclined to bow to the earth, — for their indulgence in treating as young and beautiful a woman who has scarcely been either for the last ten years."

"Oh! fie, fie, fie!" again ejaculated Madame de Valmoré, (somewhat more than a contemporary of the charming Princess in question!) But Zriny proceeded undismayed.

"Thanks to the kinswomanly hand she extented towards me, therefore," said he, "I worked my way into the very heart of the jockey set. It was there I became acquainted with Tom Howard, Charley Roxborough, Lord James Hillingdon, and others, whose genius as sporting men is impressed upon my mind to the amount of ten thousand ducats!"

Poor fellow! Had he not been a confounded foreigner, I should almost have pitied him: so thoroughly could I enter into the misery of being a lamb in the lion's den.

"I dined one day at — House," he continued, "the week preceding Ascot, and was surprised, — almost disgusted, — to

find nothing talked of but the odds. Here, as in Vienna, such would be the case among men, at a supper or breakfast party. But at a table where young and beautiful women predominated, surely some better topic might have been found!"

"If such were the leading interest of the men present," observed Mrs. Hawley, with more philosophy than I expected under a muslin gown, "it was kinder to discuss it freely, than put such a constraint upon their inclinations as would have made them feel the ladies *de trop*, and rejoice when they left the room."

"At all events," cried Zriny, "I who, knowing nothing of the horses, had little interest in the race, could not help feeling that the eagerness with which even these blue-eyed angels listened to discussions about physicking and sweating a horse, was indicative of most ignoble *penchants*. I doubt whether a company of petty merchants would have stooped (if met for festive purposes) to squabble over the value of their puncheons of sugar or cargoes of hides, as I heard certain lords and ladies of what we are accustomed to call the most enlightened aristocracy in Europe, dispute and wrangle over their bets."

Not choosing to sit by and hear my country people abused, however justly, I attempted some stupid generality about the privileges to be accorded to racing, as a manly sport, — a gentlemanly and even noble pursuit.

"A pursuit which certainly affords temporary excitement to the least amusable of mankind," cried Zriny, "and *that* is no trifling recommendation. As to its manliness, hunting, if you please, is a manly sport; for there a man risks no neck or limbs but his own. But to pay other people for desperately riding certain horses, which you have bred to such perfection of speed as to be unfit for any purpose but the turf, may be a good speculation for those who are too proud to deal in any other commodity than horseflesh; but I see nothing *manly* in the trade! The prejudices of society apart, one might as well make money as a grazier!"

"If you talked thus in England," said Mrs. Hawley, with a smile, "I am afraid you passed for a shocking heretic!"

"*A Rome, comme à Rome.* Il faut hurler avec les loups!

And when, a few tays afterwards, the races came off, and I discovered by the tens of thousands that changed hands within a quarter of an hour, the necessity that those who chose to embark their fortunes in such a spec should at least understand the principles of their calling, I could better excuse the Egerias of the racing stable, who knew the interests of their children and credit of their lords to be risked upon the issue of what a rogueish or drunken groom might decide to his liking!"

"Most of the English noblemen engaged on the turf," said I, swelling with bootless indignation, "possess fortunes of a magnitude to render their losses comparatively indifferent."

"Pardon me! The wrangling at — House led me to form very different conclusions! Are you acquainted with Lord Barner?" said he, beginning to surmise that he was talking to a snob. — "Or Lord James Hillingdon, or Sir Thomas Howard?" naming certain individuals by whom Newmarket and the Jockey Club were then held in thrall. "In that case," continued the Prince, on receiving my embarrassed negative, "believe the eyes that have seen and ears that have heard the disputes of that supreme conclave, — that many of them shave as close the abyss of ruin, every successive Derby and Leger, as the wretchedest stock jobber going, when rumours of wars distract the money market!"

"Let us hope," said Albertine, as if longing to support my antagonism, if she only knew how, "that an imperfect knowledge of our customs and language may have led you into exaggerated conceptions."

"Facts are stubborn things, *ma chère dame!*" cried the Prince, more warmly. "Of those with whom I dined at — House, and who were pointed out to me as of a race ennobled before the days of Magna Charta, *one* has since levanted, and is now skulking about the streets of Paris, ashamed to look at his own face in the looking-glass; another, young Roxborough, who with an allowance of a few hundreds a year from his family, has seldom less than twenty thousand pounds on the Derby, would have been a defaulter, had not his friends come forward in his *behalf; while the family* of a third was lately molested by having

a coroner's inquest held in the house; his valet-de-chambre, (*tel maître, tel valet,*) having made so bad a book as to be forced to shoot himself on the eve of settling-day!"

"But, my dear Prince," interrupted Madame de Valmoré, "you do not want, I hope, to persuade us that the whole aristocracy of England are slaves of an inferior animal? When, in my youth, I visited London, high play was the order of the day. But even above *that*, the greatest of excitements, the interest of politics prevailed. In the days of Whigs and Tories, (who I am told, have ceased to exist), party spirit carried all before it, — even beyond hazard and loo. Of course you were present at a Parliamentary debate?" —

"For my sins, *chère Comtesse*, yes!" retorted the Prince; "and felt much as poor Visconti must have done, when surveying the gallery of the Louvre after the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the ancient masters enumerated in his catalogue were removed, and restored to their rightful owners. Conceive a flight of sparrows, bearing lucifer-matches in their beaks to simulate the eagle of Jove with his thunderbolt! — Think of Pitt, Fox, and Windham, replaced by the Irish Secretary, who puts his hand in his breeches pockets, like a crocodile; — by Sidmouth, from whose pocket one always expects to see the end of a halter hanging out — by old Liverpool, with his lordly garter bracing his pantaloons (facetiously said to represent two French cities — Too-long, and Too-loose); — or by Canning, who, like the Satyr in the fable, blows hot and cold in a breath! There was a smart lawyer — a vulgar fellow with desperate pretensions to be a fine gentleman, to whom the *beau monde* made up to obtain the disposal of his patronage, — said to be a discarded favourite of a court where all is favouritism, who —"

Sir John Leach, and myself, were luckily spared his further impertinence! — Even the tedious *entr'actes* of a foreign theatre cannot last for ever; and on the first tap of the *chef d'orchestre*, with a profound bow to Madame de Valmoré, and a more intimate salutation to her niece, the travelled chatter-box vanished.

I was whispering to myself that, *now*, the happiness and

comfort of my evening were about to begin; when lo! my eyes were diverted from the fair face beside me, by the extraordinary contorsions of a voluminous body which blocked up the entrance to the *balcon*, opposite our box; — an uncouth individual who stood mopping and mowing with the evident intention of attracting my notice.

By all that was vexatious, — Archdeacon Roxborough himself! — a man whom I as much expected to see in Paris, as the Wolds of Yorkshire removed from their foundations! —

Aware that he was capable of intruding into Madame de Valmoré's box, and disturbing, by his vociferious interruptions, all enjoyment of the performance, I lost no time in joining him. — Another moment, and we were hurrying together into the *foyer*.

CHAPTER XXV.

The desire of power in excess, caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess, caused man to fall. But in good-will towards our fellow-creatures, there is *no* excess. Neither can angel or man come in danger by it. BACON.

How was the worthy old soul to surmise with what anguish of spirit I noted the hardly-repressed smiles that greeted on all sides his queerly-cut clerical coat and hat, and black silk stockings and gaiters, so unsuitable to our place of meeting — so incomprehensible to Parisians; who, had I expounded the business, by denouncing him as a minister of the Gospel, would, in those days of the elder Bourbons, have been horror-struck at the sacrilege of his presence in such a spot.

"I was told at your hotel, (where I am putting up,) my dear boy," said he, "that I should find you at the opera. So, to lose no time, off I hurried, without so much as washing my hands! — But I knew twasn't the fashion, abroad, for people to go dressed to the theatres." —

"Except to the opera," — said I, in a low voice, a hint purporting to make him as much ashamed of himself as I was of him.

"But you don't seem surprized to see me, Wrottesley?" *cried he, little suspecting* the feelings of mortification, which

left no leisure for surprise. "Yet, I can tell you, Moore's Almanack itself might have announced to me, last week, that I should be here to-night: and, for once, I should have gainsayed the oracle! —"

"You are so fond of music, my dear Archdeacon," I was beginning, "that —"

"Music?" cried he, stopping short. "Why, you don't surely suppose that crotchets and quavers brought me here to hunt you up? No, no! the case is just this. Five days ago, when I was dining at Hawley Chase, our poor old friend expressed himself so positively that a letter of his upon business, which you had failed to answer, could never have reached your hands, that I was ass enough to offer to take post and make the inquiry in person."

"And, in passing through London," said I, evading the question of the letter, "you, of course, dined with Charley?"

"I promise you I did no such thing! And don't be too sure you will ever hear of my breaking bread with him again!" — cried the Archdeacon, in progressive indignation. "I 'm beginning to doubt whether there 's a drop of his father's blood in the fellow's veins. My cousin Gratian may be a clodhopper; but hang me if any one ever charged him with being a rogue!" —

"Nor his son either, I should imagine," said I, "if he hoped to escape in whole skin!"

"I tell you what, Wrottesley," retorted my companion; "'t is a cowardly thing for one of my cloth to call names; and when my own right cheek receives a buffet, I can turn my left for another, as in vocation bound. But black coat or brown, I will not stand by to see a friend get a cuff in the face, — more particularly when that other party is a woman, and unable to stand up for her own."

"And still more particularly," I ventured to add, to show him I understood the drift of his allusions, "when the victim is a gentle feminine creature like poor Caroline, whom any man of honour and feeling would be proud of risking his life to defend."

"I 'm glad to hear you say *that*, Harry!" cried my companion. "Give us your hand! — By Jove, I 'm as glad as may be to hear you say that! — Half of my errand here seems already accomplished!" —

My answer was a sad and remorseful waive of the head.

"Don't put me out of heart before you 've heard my story," rejoined the Archdeacon, interpreting my gesture. "When you 've heard how those poor girls have been used, *then* tell me you won't stretch out a helping hand to snatch poor Car out of an untimely grave if you dare! — I 'll let you know in a few words how the land lies," he continued. — But already he had talked himself into such a state of excitement, that, between the heat of the gas-lamps and of his wrath, he was fain to lift his shovel-hat and wipe his bald head so sedulously, that, by way of sedative, it occurred to me to offer him an ice.

"An ice on an empty stomach?" cried he. "My service t 'ye, — my service t 'ye! Thanks to my spendthrift cousins, I have a creditor or two; and my life is not yet insured for their benefit. But if you could get me such a thing as a glass of claret-cup —"

Though eager to comply, I foresaw that even Tortoni, however versed in the vagaries of gastronomic Europe, would be scarcely up to the compounding of a potation almost as anomalous as a glass of champagne-negus. But I was not sorry for a pretext to get him away from the theatre; and by the time we were installed in a quiet little *salon* at Tortoni's, I began to breathe again. My composure was not of long duration after his story commenced.

"Will you believe it, my dear Wrottesley," said he, "that Charley has the audacity to saddle upon *your* shoulders the break-up of his family! He talks of having backed you in bills to a tremendous amount, which have done up his credit with the Jews. That for eight or ten years past, — ever since he went to Cambridge, in short, — he has been draining his old gander of a father of every guinea he could command, is no secret to you. *The girls* were then at their samplers. — But as soon as I saw *them growing up* into good and sensible creatures, I warned

them that money matters were going sadly amiss with Sir Gratian, to induce them to keep household matters within bounds. And so they did, bless them! without ever fretting after London and its gim-crackery, like other girls of their age."

"The early engagement of *one* of them," said I, with some bitterness, "was a sufficient reason for *her* preferring Yorkshire to town."

"And was there no merit in adhering to that early engagement, in defiance of the attentions of the showy young Lords whom Charley every now and then brought down to the Elms, as a chance for his sisters?" — retorted the Archdeacon, giving as reprehensive a thump to the table before him, as though it were his pulpit-cushion. "The truth was, the young folks looked forward to a future home at Rainham, till Old Wrottesley's death threw them abroad again; and I confess to my shame, that, thinking the match a poor one for my cousin, I was not sorry to learn your determination not to hold yourself bound by the promise of your predecessor."

"The promise was never explained to me, either by the Temples or Sir Robert Hawley," interrupted I, "till I had pledged the living in another quarter."

"Yet the rector of your parish was surely the first person you came in contact with, on your arrival at Wrottesley?" —

"I dined with him immediately after the funeral; when he made mysterious allusions to Miss Roxborough's attachment, — but so vaguely that I was wholly in the dark. As to his brother, Dr. Temple never even mentioned his name."

"Just like his false delicacy! — The Doctor would not compromise his sense of dignity to gain a mitre! — Praiseworthy enough, perhaps, as regards himself. — But when the happiness of other people is at stake, I hold this sort of high-mightiness a most unchristian feeling! Why couldn't he tell you at once that old Wrottesley had promised the living to his brother, to whom Car Roxborough had promised her hand? — Instead of which, because she had twenty thousand pounds and Henry nothing, he was afraid of being accused of seeking to aggrandize his family, — as if such a benefice would not have placed his brother on a

par with the girl he loved! — Bless my soul and body! — It strikes me that if the happiness of a worthy young couple were dependent upon my own stiff-necked pride I would put it into my pocket with as little scruple as the Venetians used their patents of nobility whenever they set up as shopkeepers."

"But my dear Archdeacon," said I — (partly to divert his attention from the extraordinary mixture of Médoc, soda-water, capillaire, and clarified ice, placed before us by way of claret-cup) "surely there was a time when you regarded the two Temples with nearly as evil an eye as that cast upon them by Sir Gratian or his son?"

"Who denies it, pray, — who denies it?" cried he, smacking his lips with an indescribable wry face at the singular beverage with which he was making acquaintance. "The Doctor was too much of a kill-joy for me. I 'm addicted, I own, to good living; whereas Temple cares for nothing but the living that makes good dying. I owed him a grudge for converting Wrottesley Hall into a sort of Sadler's Wells La Trappe; convinced that he might have converted the old gentleman into a good Christian, without transforming him into a churl. However, as you may suppose, 'tisn't for Temple's sake I crossed the sea to dodge you out. — But when I consider how shamefully those poor girls have been dealt with —"

"By whom? — Their father or their brother?" —

"Their father as a fool; — their brother as a knave. Just as Lord John Jocelyn was about to take possession of the Elms, Charley contrived to get an execution put in for a debt of his for which Sir Gratian had made himself liable, to the tune of seven thousand pounds!"

"You say *contrived*. But are you certain my dear Archdeacon, that he could avoid it?"

"Do you think I 'd accuse my own kith and kin unless I 'd irrefragable proof of his turpitude? — Well, Sir! The thing was so managed as to fall a few days after Caroline's coming of age; when she obtained a sufficient command over her fortune to assign over the sum in question for the release of her father's *pictures and plate*. — I have been fighting a hard battle for years,

as their trustee, to keep their portions uninjured by so much as a chip. — But how was I to circumvent the underhand arrangements between Charles and Lord Fortrose; or such tricks as the one I have been describing? At all events, when I found poor Car thus robbed, I spoke out; and told both father and son that, so far from abetting any further their opposition to her match with Temple's brother, I should think her a lucky girl to obtain a protector against her nearest relations. A few months afterwards, Rainham fell in; when I hastened to speak my mind to Sir Robert Hawley."

To avoid hearing what sort of speaking such a mind had produced, I harked back to Fortrose. — "I could not understand," I said, "why Adela's match was to be regarded as a sacrifice!"

"You *would*, though, I can tell you," he frankly replied, "if you knew the poor girl's contempt and aversion for men of her brother's stamp! Adela was made to be the loving wife of some honest, plain-dealing Squire; and refused that drunken fellow Fortrose again and again, till he ought to have been ashamed of asking her. But when her father explained to her in plain English, that his necessities had left them without house or home, and that the only roof left to shelter her and her sister was that of Fortrose Castle, who but must admire the self-government of the good girl in frankly avowing to the Earl how little he was indebted to her choice, while as frankly bestowing upon him her hand."

"A sad look-out for both!" said I, with a shudder, reflecting how easily such a case might have been my own, had no Henry Temple been beforehand with my pretensions to Caroline.

"I don't agree with you," retorted the Archdeacon. "So good a daughter, so excellent a sister, will make the best of wives. Adela has acted solely upon principle; and Fortrose is a lucky man to get her, even if her brother had levied a heavier per centage on her dowry of twenty thousand pounds. But there has been a sad drawback on her wedded happiness — such as it is. The keen air of the Highlands seems to have completed what

three years of trouble and anxiety too well began; and poor Car is in a deep decline."

"All girls who are crossed in love, are said to be in a deep decline!" said I, with a peevish acerbity that reached no further than my lips.

"And now and then, prove so far gone in feminine perversity, as to die of it!" — sternly rejoined the Archdeacon. "Let us hope this one angel may be spared to us; for few so meek and faithful tread the earth." —

I knew it; but why was I to own it? Had she not preferred her rusty-suited tutor, to Wrottesley Park with all its splendour, including the fat venison, fine asparagus, and old hock, so dear to the recollections of the Archdeacon.

"I tell you what, Harry Wrottesley!" cried my companion, of a sudden, after gulping down his emotions and half a glass of the claret-cup. "If you don't rescue this poor child, by securing Rainham to Henry Temple —"

"Well, Sir?" said I, calmly — perceiving that he paused —

"May you never sleep in your bed till the day that takes you to the one where all men find rest!" said he, more seriously than I expected. "Your predecessor at Wrottesley Hall promised him the living. He was educated for the Church expressly on the faith of that promise. His conduct, from his boyhood upwards, has been such as to do honour to his prospects. His brother's high reputation in the county, adds credit to his own. Your guardian asks of you, as a favour, to give him the living. The parish wishes it — your friends expect it of you. — Answer me, in a word! — Are we to shake you thankfully by the hand for your compliance, or are we not?"

"You are *not!*" said I, in a low, but firm, voice. "Sorely against my will, I have, this day, despatched a letter to Charles Roxborough, admitting myself pledged to submit to his nomination. And though I have appealed to him as strongly in favour of Henry Temple as though he were a brother of my own, we both know enough of him to be certain that he will be guided only by *his own* inclinations —"

"Or interest!" — added the Archdeacon, with knitted brows.

"Are you quite sure, Wrottesley, there is no simony in the matter? — Are you quite sure that this advowson has not been made a new way to pay old debts?" —

"I do not understand you," said I.

"I mean," continued he, again forcibly impressing his opinion on the *toile cirée* of the table before him, "that the elder brother of young Whichcote (the future incumbent of Rainham,) is known to be one of Roxborough's most urgent creditors."

"Whichcote?" cried I, in a voice that carried its guarantee of unfeigned amazement — "you do not mean to say that it is to Tom Whichcote your cousin has promised the living?" —

"To whom else?" he rejoined — scarcely less astonished at my air of surprise. "Why, my dear Wrottesley, the gift is said to be confirmed by a paper in your own handwriting!"

"Signed two years ago, — the name a blank! Independent of my desire to bestow this piece of preferment on Temple, believe me, I would as soon have Cribb or Aby Belasco settled at Rainham, as Tom Whichcote! — Tom Whichcote is my nightmare, — my utter aversion!" —

"Then pluck up a spirit, my lad, and late as it is in the day for opposition, send Charley and his claims no matter where, instead of risking the perdition of a parish of twelve thousand souls!"

"The more spirit I pluck up, my dear Archdeacon, said I, "the more my conscience must confirm the mischief created by my folly. Any engagement bearing my name is, and ought to be, binding. All I can do in atonement, — and I will do it cheerfully —is to bestow, on coming of age, and equally attested by my signature, a stipend of one thousand per annum on the curate of Wrottesley, on condition that Dr. Temple nominates his brother to the office."

"And do you think so meanly of either of the Temples, as to fancy they would accept such an exchange?" cried the Archdeacon. "Do you think so ill of Car as that she would bestow her affections on a fellow capable of receiving a salary for doing nothing? No, no! since you 're pledged, you 're pledged. You

must put up with the responsibility of having settled a hunting parson in one of the most important cures I know of; — and Caroline —"

"*And Caroline?*"

"Must die — a poor broken-hearted creature, feeling herself in everybody's way — without a friend in this stony-hearted world to lend her a helping hand!" —

"And you can actually praise, as high-minded, the squeamishness which refuses what might preserve her from such a destiny?"

"The case is just this, Wrottesley; with time and patience, Henry Temple is certain of preferment from his college; and prudence suggests that he had better keep his fellowship till he have wherewithal to keep a wife — perhaps a wife and children. It is only myself and Lady Fortrose, who, too fond of poor Car to be blind to the fact that her life is hanging on a thread, and that her last days might be made happy by a union with the man she loves, trusted all might be brought about by the falling-in of Rainham. However, all's up and over now! In spite of my break-neck speed, I see I have arrived too late. If you wrote to-day, confirming your promise, legal forms alone are wanting to make young Whichcote the shepherd of a most ill-fated flock. — So let's say no more about it; for further discussion could only be painful to both. My poor cousin Car must be otherwise taken care of."

He rose, while speaking, as if he wanted spirits to protract our conviviality. But as he had taken up his abode at Meurice's, it became a matter of course that we should walk home arm in arm.

"I am sorry to say, I must spend four-and-twenty hours longer in a capital where they've such heterodox notions of claret-cup!" said he, as we took our way homewards. "I've a little commission to execute for Sir Robert."

"If I can be of the least use —" I was beginning — but he almost peevishly interrupted me with,

"No! I shall get on best alone! You're far too fine a gentleman *to be burthened* with such a pack-saddle as an old parson.

By the way, if I 'm not indiscreet, who was the pretty creature in whose box I was so lucky as to ferret you out to-night? — Never saw a sweeter countenance! — I hardly wonder at poor Car's being clean swept out of your mind by your foreign trip, if there are many such faces in Paris!"

"It is one you ought to have seen before this, in England," said I; "not so much because the lady is by birth, an English-woman —"

"I could have sworn it!" — interrupted the Archdeacon.

"As because," I gravely continued, enjoying by anticipation his surprise, — "she happens to be the widow of the heir of Hawley Chase."

"*Mrs. Hawley?*" cried he, stopping short, and striking his walking-stick so stoutly on the then scanty pavement of the Rue de la Paix, that the soldiers at the *corps de garde* started forward to see what was the matter. "Why, 't is with her, my dear fellow, lies my commission from Sir Robert! He bad me, on no account, quit Paris without an interview. The old gentleman, it seems, has heard wonders lately of her merits; and was implored by one to whom he showed himself a flinty-hearted father, to stand her friend. And now that he 's getting in years (or rather out of years, for the last session all but knocked him up, and I doubt whether he 'll ever stand another election), he appears to have a hankering after the only human being left in the world who was dear to those whom he cast off. Nothing would surprise me less, than to see this English-French woman, or French-English woman, whichever you please to call her, take the head of his house."

"I cannot believe that such a post would be supportable to her," said I, feeling for the dignity of Albertine.

"Pho, pho!" was his contemptuous reply. "Do you fancy me young enough to believe that, with ten thousand a-year going a begging, any Monsieur or Monsieur's daughter, between the Seine and the Garonne, would be ass enough to make mouths about accepting it?" —

"But what made you hesitate, my dear Archdeacon," said I, "to accept my company in your visit to Mrs. Hawley?"

"Because Sir Robert informed me, when I objected to tumble unannounced into the midst of a pack of foreigners, that the family of his grand-daughter were simple-living, simple-hearted folks, quite out of the line of what young fellows, like you and Charley Roxborough, call the world. Which determined me, Master Harry, to go and pay my humdrum visit by myself."

"I had intended, under any circumstances," said I, "to drive down, to-morrow to Monsieur Des Auliers' villa. I shall be most happy if you will take a seat in my carriage!"

"Poor Frank Hawley!" mused my companion, as if following up some chain of invisible associations. "I was the only one of his early friends who exchanged a word with him after his marriage! My friendship for *him* was one of the many causes that created a coolness betwixt me and Hawley Chase. But Frank was my school-fellow. If he chose to marry a country girl instead of the grim ladyship picked out for him by his father, 't was n't my business to disinherit him — 't was n't my business to turn the cold shoulder on him. — I dined with the young couple, in their shabby lodgings, the day I christened their baby."

"Wrottesley Hawley?"

"Ay, Wrottesley I think they called him! — The old fellow at the Hall was mighty fond of Frank; and would perhaps have done him a good turn in his will, but for Sir Robert's interference. But as I was saying, I christened the child; and next day, they were off for France, — where the peace of Amiens took many a fool besides themselves, under the idea that among people who lived upon soup made of pea-shucks, they could manage to get on upon the few hundreds a-year which Francis inherited from his mother."

"When the sudden breaking out of the war rendered them *détenus*," said I, — to whom the whole story had been detailed by Monsieur Des Auliers.

"*Détenus?* Yes; if that 's the word for prisoners on parole! And thus, thanks to Sir Robert's obduracy, the sole heir of one of the oldest families in Yorkshire came to be brought up among the frog-eating Monsieurs. And what was the consequence? — *On Boney's overthrow* in 1814, (poor Frank's little wife having

long been laid under the sod) the old gentleman insisted on his son's returning to England, when, as the newspaper advertisements have it, 'all was to be overlooked, and no questions asked.' But 'twouldn't do. Frank wrote over a heap of rubbish about dreading the humid atmosphere of Yorkshire. — (Humid, indeed! when for fifty miles round Hawley Chase, a humming-bird might fly about after dusk without turning a feather!) — And so the father and son went on year after year, health-hunting at German baths and wintering in Italy; as an excuse for not choosing to live under the roof of a man who 'd shown himself such a savage to the poor creature who was dead and gone!"

"The end of all which was, that Francis Hawley died, and his son followed him to the grave, before a cordial reconciliation had been effected with Hawley Chase."

"Exactly! Leaving a widow who — But tell me, Wrottesley my boy," cried the Archdeacon, suddenly interrupting himself, "how comes it, pray, that you 're so well up in matters that occurred before you ever set foot in Yorkshire, or looked any living soul of the name of Hawley in the face? — By Jupiter! Something very much like a new light breaks into my thick head! The indulgence shown by Sir Robert to certain follies of yours which all but merited the mill, arose no doubt from consciousness of the evils wrought in his own family by his obduracy. But till this moment, it never crossed my mind that he might have other motives for letting you trifle away the summer here in Paris; or that the friend he talked of as affording him such interesting accounts of his grandson's widow, was no other than the mad-cap master of what my poor little cousins of the Elms used to call Paradise Lost!"

"You are mistaken, my dear Archdeacon," said I, — "completely mistaken. My intimacy with Mrs. Hawley is unfortunately so recent, that as yet I have had no opportunity of endeavouring to transmit to Sir Robert the favourable impressions I do not deny that she has made upon me."

"After all," he rejoined, as if again thinking aloud, "I don't know but it might be the best thing that could happen to them all! — The heir-at-law is a Catholic and a skin-flint, — had

things for the neighbourhood — bad things for the county. Whereas the estates would form, if thrown into a ring fence, one of those standard properties which tend to ennoble the district; and, by Jupiter! the blot on poor Roxborough Elms will require a plaguy deal of bleaching to efface. Good night, my boy!" added he aloud, on finding himself at that moment at the foot of Meurice's staircase. — "We 'll settle to-morrow at breakfast the hour for our visit to the future lady of Wrottesley Hall."

Though I accepted the compliment with an embarrassed laugh, I trembled when we took the road to Sceaux the following afternoon, at the mere idea of the indiscretions by which my companion was likely to commit me in the eyes of those who, however frank and *naïf*, were so strictly decorous in word and deed, that the blunt freedoms of the Archdeacon could not but shock and disgust them. The Jesuitical strictness just then prevalent among the Churchmen of Paris, seemed to assign double enormity to the sensuality of his tastes, and downrightness of his manners. Though Monsieur Des Auliers was a man who liked to hear things called by their right names, no one was better aware that many things should remain nameless, and many subjects unbroached. The re-marriage of his niece, for instance, and the conduct of her grandfather, were tabooed — as impossible of discussion at Les Epines.

Just as I was communing within myself, on approaching the sweep-gates of the villa, whether or not to give him a plain lesson or two on French etiquette, and entreat him to spare my own feelings and the blushes of Albertine, a cabriolet drove past us at the utmost speed of the finest horse I ever saw out of England; in which I seemed to discern the faces of two persons, — the presence of one of whom indicated as strongly that the cab had *not* driven out of the gates of Les Epines, as that of the other begot a contrary opinion. The driver was no other than the handsome stranger who had disappeared so suddenly from Mrs. Hawley's box the preceding night; but his companion was Nestor Platicheff, dressed from top to toe after the plate of "Fashions for *July*" in the English "World of Fashion."

"*A horse dealer* and a hair-dresser, I presume?" — cried

the Archdeacon, as soon as the dust left flying by their wheels, had a little subsided.

"Beware of saying as much to Mrs. Hawley," I rejoined; "for I suspect they preceded us as her guests."

"I give her up then!" cried he, pulling his shovel-hat a little forwarder on his forehead. "By Jupiter, I give her up! If we can judge of a man by the company he keeps, twice as sure is the indication as regards a woman!"

And having reached the door of Les Epines before he attained more than the middle of his lecture, I was obliged to stop short in the little marble hall leading to the saloon, holding him tight by the button, that he might exhaust the crabbed truths he was venting on the sex in general, and young widows in particular, before I ushered him into the presence of Albertine.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Vi. — I am a messenger.
O. — Speak your office.
Vi. — It alone concerns your ear. I bring no overture of war, — no taxation of homage. I hold the olive in my hand: my words are as full of peace as matter. SHAKSPEARE.

I HAD calculated, after the one-sidedness of my own barren nature, in fearing the oddities of the Archdeacon might give offence. As the most restive horse is often tamed at once by being placed in a well-broken team, so immediate was the influence of Monsieur Des Auliers' cheerful suavity and the graceful courtesy of Albertine, that I could wish nothing altered in his deportment.

Before he had been an hour at Les Epines, I even envied him the confidential footing on which he stood with the family; for, after accepting an invitation to stay and dine, he requested a private interview with Mrs. Hawley; during which, I was left to the old lawyer and the family portraits. At length, even the former was called away; and so impatient did I become under the consciousness that a family council was going on from which I was excluded, that, though a copper-coloured sunshine was ripening the corn-fields that clothe the uplands of Sceaux, I strolled out into the gardens, and from the gardens into the village, stood

by the grave of Florian, whose fables Miss Primer had drummed into my head in childhood, per force of an ebony ruler; and endeavoured to fancy what the palace of the Duc de Maine must have been, where nothing is now to be seen but the rotunda of a Sunday orchestra; — just as travellers in Greece sentimentalize and drivel quartos over the ruins of Troy, and then come home and discover they have mistaken the site.

Too proud to be *de trop* in a party of friends, I contrived to return only in time to wash my hands for dinner; at which I found, with regret, two or three of the leathern-cheeked confraternity of old Des Auliers make up the party; and with surprise, that Mrs. Hawley's eyelids were swollen with weeping. What the deuce had the Archdeacon been saying to her? Nothing *very* bitter; for her manner towards him was if possible still more ingratiating than to the twaddling *confrères* of "*mon oncle;*" while upon myself, even with the tears still glittering in her eyes, she smiled with all her usual amenity.

Pre-occupied by surmises touching the origin of emotions which rendered the cheeks of Albertine so pale, and those of her uncle so feverishly red, I had scarcely leisure to note that the Archdeacon managed to make himself perfectly understood by them all; or how much valuable information he contrived to extract out of those I had so little known how to turn to account. But when the dessert was placed on table, and the heart of the prize-fruit-grower expanded with the pride of exhibiting his early peaches and nectarines to one whose eyes and mouth watered at the sight of their bloomy plumpness, the mystery was expounded by the old gentleman's proposing a toast in champagne — (among the elderly French, Heaven forgive them! still a dessert potation) — to the prosperous journey of his niece.

"The pressing invitation of Sire Hawley, and the auspicious occasion that presented itself in the escort of an old and valued friend of the family, had decided her to defer no longer her visit to England."

"So suddenly?" was the universal cry, — while I alone held *my peace.*

"*Yes; she was to* depart on the morrow. Professional

business rendered it impossible for Monsieur le Grand Vicaire to prolong his stay!"

How I wished the sparkling Ay in which the Archdeacon was quaffing the health of Albertine might choke him on the spot! — To think of the craft that may conceal itself under a shovel-hat! To think of the cunning with which he had withheld his projects from me, till I had housed him safe under the roof of Les Epines! —

But, after all, whom had I to thank but myself for her departure? Was it any one's fault but my own, that for three long months I had neglected to present my letter of introduction to the family? three months, — during which, I might have so entwined myself round her heart, as to determine her unhesitating refusal of the old gentleman's proposal; while, on the other hand, my enthusiastic encomiums had perhaps been the means of stimulating Sir Robert's anxiety for her company. — Fool that I was! — A little caution, a little delay, and we might have returned to England together! — Whereas, I was *now* under marching orders for Germany; having expressly undertaken to absent myself from Yorkshire till the eve of the attainment of my majority.

Now that my chance was over, I could not picture to myself without bitter remorse the autumn I had lost. Nothing would have been easier than, after a hasty visit to Baden in compliance with my engagement, to return to Paris, — on pretence of health, or business, or no matter what, — and devote my whole existence to Albertine.

"My whole existence to Albertine!" The idea as it traversed my mind directed my eyes instantly towards her; and never had I found her half so lovely. At all times, her figure was grace and flexibility itself; at all times, there was a child-like purity in her fair, fair face, more ethereal than mortal visage is apt to wear. But now, the grief of parting from her kind old uncle, — the anxiety of quitting a domestic circle where she was adored, to plunge herself into the careless crowd of a strange country, — imparted so thoughtful an expression to her brow, and to her lips a smile which trembled there as tears quiver in the eyes, that she

attained all that was ever wanting in her countenance — the charm of exquisite sensibility.

The friendly, fatherly way, in which Archdeacon Roxborough had talked to her of her late father-in-law, to whom she was respectfully attached, had begotten an instantaneous intimacy between them; and I saw that she listened to *his* account of Sir Robert and Hawley Chase with far greater confidence in his words than she had been pleased to bestow on mine. When *he* talked of Sir Robert's repentance of his early severity to his only son, and described the withering years of anxiety the old man had undergone while the heirs of his ancient house,— the sole beings upon earth in whose veins his blood was flowing, — were living in exile in a foreign country, his grey hairs afforded a guarantee that he had witnessed what he described. The Archdeacon had held her husband in his arms, — had placed him within the pale of the Christian Church. No wonder she should draw so close to his side, and look so confidingly into his face! No wonder that while he addressed her, such tender emotions pervaded her gentle frame.

How I loved her for the distress she showed at quitting that quiet house with its circle of old *sédentaires*, set up there evening after evening like wooden ninepins! — How I admired in her a total absence of that vulgar fussiness which renders most women insupportable on the eve of a long journey! She was to be accompanied by a faithful old waiting woman, who had been the confidential attendant of her late mother, by whom every preparation was quietly affected; so that her whole time and attention could be devoted to the kind old man she was so reluctant to abandon.

"Under any circumstances," said she, in answer to my condolences on this point, "Madame de Valmoré was to have established herself in a day or two at Les Epines, to spend the autumn with her brother; and she will make no difficulty about arriving a day or two earlier. — For my dear uncle must not be left alone. — But that you are leaving Paris, Mr. Wrottesley," she continued, "I should have endeavoured to obtain your promise *to visit him* often during my absence; that, through your

correspondence with Sir Robert Hawley, I might learn the exact state of his health."

"You afford me double reason to regret my purposed visit to Germany!" said I, trying to infuse as much sentiment as might be into my whisper. "The prospect of being of the least service to you, or affording you a moment's pleasure, would have made me a more frequent visitor to Monsieur Des Auliers than perhaps his patience might endure."

"You little know how indulgent he is towards young people!" she rejoined, with an air of patronage which made me feel as if a glass of cold water had been poured down my back. "Besides, the interest felt by Sir Robert in your welfare must ensure our own. In the letters brought by Archdeacon Roxborough he questions me closely concerning the impression you have made on us. — He seems to imagine you have been spending the greater part of the summer with us." —

"As I ought to have done!" — all but rose to my lips. And again, in the secresy of my heart, I cursed my folly for having failed to profit by the opportunities provided by my guardian. His inquisitiveness touching Albertine's opinion of me, afforded confirmation strong, of my previous suspicions, that a matrimonial scheme in my favour was not far distant from his thoughts.

Having contrived to draw her aside from the party, who were taking their coffee as usual in the *orangerie d'été*, it seemed incumbent on me to profit by the occasion, for the expression of my heartfelt regrets that I should be absent from England precisely at the moment of her visit to Yorskhire. "It would have overjoyed me," I said, "to show her the beauties of the neighbourhood! — There were scenes on my own estate, which I could not bear the thought of her visiting in company with strangers."

"Tell me which they are," was her frank reply, "and I will reserve them for some future time, when perhaps we may be there together."

I thanked her by a look, — and *such* a look! But I am afraid the dusk of the darkening twilight, prevented it from reaching its destination.

"I told you, if you remember," said she, after a pause,

"that I had positively declined a winter journey to England; and Sir Robert's failing health it seems, disinclines him to wait till next summer to make my acquaintance. The trip to Paris of your venerable friend yonder —" (*my* venerable friend!) "seemed to afford a favourable opportunity; and his letters, imploring me in the name of common humanity, and for love of my poor lost Wrottesley, to come and see him before his eyes are closed for ever, are of a nature no human being could resist."

"No angel like yourself, could resist perhaps!" said I, almost affected. "But what alas! more natural than that you should visit England, where the brightest fortunes await you? Sir Robert will receive you with open arms, — Sir Robert will adore you! — His friends will become yours. — Wherever you turn, affection and admiration will attend your steps. All I venture to hope in return, is that my poor old country will find some favour in your sight, and that you will reconcile yourself to our climate and habits. *You* must not feel towards us like Prince Zriny and other foreigners, with whose approval we can better afford to dispense."

"From *my* criticisms," she replied, in a voice that faltered beyond concealment, "you have less to fear than you may think for. *My* prejudices, early and late, are all in favour of England. My birth-place is the birth-place of all who have best loved me — of all whom I love best."

I should, perhaps, have said more than was altogether discreet, in answer to this; but, at that moment, the blowing of a grampus on the sanded walk behind us, sounded in my ears; and I was forced by the Archdeacon's vociferous apostrophe, to turn hastily round, and agree with him that the carriage should be ordered, that we might not intrude further on our hosts, on the eve of so long a separation. From that instant till the horses were put to, he stuck as close to our side as an oak-apple to its leaf; on pretence of proposing arrangements for the morrow's journey, and promising to be ready to a second, at the hour appointed by Albertine to call and take him up.

Our drive back to Paris would have been a silent one for any *effort I felt tempted* to make to enliven it. But my companion

was too much pleased with the reception he had met with — the simple rational hospitality of old Des Auliers, and above all, the feminine sweetness of Albertine, — to keep his ruminations to himself.

"A charming young woman!" muttered he, "worthy, I could almost warrant her, of the great good luck awaiting her. 'Tisn't often the blind goddess makes such a happy hit in her vagaries! Well, well! the longer I live, the more it puzzles me to conjecture, what folks are born to. The babe that sprawls into the world clutching at a sceptre, dies with a beggar's staff in his hand; and the brat that bestrides a peeled osier, ends with wielding a marshal's truncheon. This daughter of a couple of French emigrants, reared, no doubt, on *soupe maigre* and *piquette*, without so much as bringing an heir to inherit it, becomes owner of one of the finest estates in Yorkshire; — while my cousin Car, through her mother grand-daughter to a peer of the realm, and daughter to one of our earliest baronets, as good as she is well-born and as pretty as she is good, sinks helplessly into the grave for want of an humble parsonage in which to shelter her aching head! — And why, forsooth? — Because her fool of a father has made away, for his son's behoof, of his life interest in her fortune; while the worthy young man, on whom she has fixed her affections, is one of the dozen children of a poor clergyman, with no other provision than his merits. Heigho!"

"But since you see Henry Temple's prospects in so wretched a light, my dear Archdeacon," said I, thankful to him for talking of Yorkshire, instead of probing my feelings relative to Albertine, "how came you ever to sanction his dangerous intimacy in Sir Gratian's family?"

"You 're going to saddle the mischief on my shoulders, eh?" cried he, a little nettled. "Ay, ay! you 've not lived for nothing, hand and glove with that master of the art of sophistry, Charley Roxborough! But if you wish to know, I 'll tell ye. In the first place, understand, that I 'm none of your smooth-tongued friends, who, like the shadow on the sun-dial, are seen only when the sun shines. As long as all was ready-money-and-holiday-making

at the Elms, I kept snug as a field-mouse in my village furrow, unless when keeping residence at the Archdeaconry. Once in a way, or so, I spent a night at my cousin's, on my way to town; and heard with pleasure what a valuable friend the two girls had found at Wrottesley Rectory. Even had I known that Temple's brother spent his vacations there, Car when the thing began, was only thirteen; and I should have thought it as harmless as Mrs. Temple, or Sir Gratian, that a raw youth of eighteen or nineteen (I ask your pardon, Wrottesley), devoted his leisure to reading poetry with the girls, or leading their ponies; with the promise of rising, in time, to preceptorship in what school-prospectuses call geography and the use of the globes."

"But when they grew too old for all this?"

"*Then*, indeed, his office acquired higher importance; for he taught them all that Sir Gratian considered of less moment than holding reins or bridles, or knowing how to rear and carve a spring chicken: he initiated them into the great mysteries of their faith —

And truths divine came mended from his tongue!" —

"A task which might surely have been left to his more authorized brother!" — was my bitter rejoinder.

"His brother was engrossed by the sad illness of a suffering wife. It was during the long vacation preceding poor Mrs. Temple's last moments, that, full of love and hope and confidence in his excellence, and satisfied with his prospects as future Rector of Rainham, poor Caroline pledged him her faith. The moment he heard of your offering the living to young Grove, it seems, he wrote, and relinquished his claim; and, from that day, dates her decline. Her father's ruin and sister's marriage, served only to accelerate the crisis."

I had nothing to retort — nothing even to plead.

"The bent of *my* nature never lay towards love-making!" resumed the Archdeacon. "Like Henry Temple, I was told in early life that the Church must find me bread; and when I escaped from college, to a family living of two hundred a-year *and a scarf* obtained by family interest, thought myself a lucky *dog*. *As ill-fate* would have it, a good pipe of my own and a

foolish fondness for piping, made me acceptable in company far from suitable to a parson — above all, to a poor parson. And when, like other whistling blackbirds, I was mewed up in a cage to lighten the yawning moments of royal *ennui*, all I gained by it was a taste for pleasures unsuitable to a churchman's duty of self-denial, and an Archdeaconry, for which most people consider *me* grievously unsuited."

"But for the benefice, however, and the patronage in which it originated," said I, "your life would have consisted in one long, sunless, cheerless day!" —

"No bad sort of day, either," retorted he, "to enhance the brightness of a happier dawn, hereafter! But, as I said before, such an existence has lent itself little to philandering. I don't know but that, in my college days, I may have addressed odes to Phillis or Chloe, like other young gentlemen, and fancied my laundress into a goddess. But since I came to man's estate, — above all, since I came to parish priest's estate, — the only tender thing I ever cared for, was a sirloin or a Michaelmas goose."

"Too bad, too bad!" — cried I, interrupting him, shocked that any man who had been spending half a day in company with Mrs. Hawley, could be guilty of such treason.

"Have you any objection to hear me to an end, Master Harry?" cried he. "I was going to add, because it never was my chance to fall into company with two such girls as Car and Adela, — good in substance as in surface, — all that woman ought to be to render her in Heaven the angel our courtesy entitles her on earth. Had *such* happened to cross my path, I should have gone through life a far less contented mortal than you see before you; and I cordially thank Heaven for not leading me into temptation which would have put me sadly out of conceit with my ruby nose and rusty coat."

"And rendered you a less trusty escort," added I, "for a beautiful widow scarcely out of her teens."

"Jealous, eh?" retorted the Archdeacon with a smile. "Young gentleman, I heartily wish you had better grounds for the feeling! — However, you don't do wrong to look sharp; for whoever may have the job of introducing this pretty creature to

Hawley Chase, 't will be nobody's fault but your own if she ever quit the country."

That night, I did not close my eyes. Though secretly satisfied of the intentions entertained in my favour by my guardian, and though far from discontented with the sentiments evinced towards me by Albertine, the certainty of her hearing unfavourable opinions expressed concerning me in England, made me tremble at the thought of her visit. What would she feel on seeing a deserted palace like Wrottesley Hall, and finding that my mother and sisters had never crossed the threshold till its master lay senseless; she, belonging to a family the most united and affectionate! — Nor would she fail to become acquainted with the John Jocelyns, now settled at the Elms; by whom she would hear me described as at once a libertine and a dupe! —

The dread of being lowered in her estimation almost prompted me to make her an immediate offer of my hand. Once affianced to me, she would not even lend an ear to their censures. Once affianced to me, my cause would be sacred in her eyes.

But even to advert to such a thing after so short an acquaintance, seemed little short of profanation. It would be robbing her of her English birthright of decency and self-respect, to fancy her capable of being influenced in her second choice by other motives than the promptings of her heart. And could these have spoken so precipitately?

As I leaned into her travelling carriage the following morning, (while the Archdeacon was wrangling his last with the waiter, and trying to understand why a *commissionnaire* should be so much more costly an appendage to an hotel than "boots," the post-horses making their *grelots* tinkle like a flock of sheep by snorting with impatience,) I was half tempted to follow the advice of Dr. Franklin, shut my eyes, harden my heart, and pop the question; assured of having my share in the emotions which rendered her eyelids so red and her countenance so heavy. But the utmost for which I found courage was a squeeze of the hand, which must have nearly dislocated her fingers; and a prediction, *awkwardly* quoted from Sheridan concerning the happy land *about to be trodden* by her fairy footsteps, that

Friends in all the ag'd she 'd meet,
And lovers in the young!

— to which, just as the Archdeacon hove in sight (with his face as red as the Bayonne ham he had been discussing, and the grumbling *commissionnaire* bearing his shaving box to be thrust under the seat,) she hastily replied by a whisper calculated to bring the life blood to my very finger tips, that — "she wished for no better friends or lovers than those she left behind!"

The carriage had turned the corner of the Rue de Rivoli, before I became thoroughly certain that it was the common earth I stood on, and that the usual sky was expanding over my bewildered head.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Un léger tremblement, — une pâleur extrême,
Une convulsion de la gorge, — un blasphême,
Quelques mots sans raison balbutiés tout bas,
C'est tout ce qu'on voyait. NAMOUNA.

Slender. — I 'll ne'er be drunk while I live, again, but in honest, civil, godly company, for this trick. I 'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves. SHAKSPEARE.

I HAVE ventured to express a doubt whether the asphalte-paved and steeple-chasing Paris of the present day, be comparable with the Paris which knew better what it ate and drank and listened to, than what it rode, drove, or smoked. But I have no doubt whatever that the Baden of those times, — the Baden when the Grand-Duchess Stéphanie was somewhere about what the youngest of her daughters is now, was worth half a hundred of the Badens created by railroads and steam-boats.

The Baden of former times was more like the Ischl or Gastein of to-day: a place whither invalids and artists resort in search of health and the picturesque; and where illustrious travellers lay down their coronets like their carpet bags to resume them on quitting the place; so that the chances are ten to one the man in a blouse you jostled at the street-corner is a Serene Highness; or the fair lady whose pony dodged against your own on entering the forest, is attended by ladies of honour and addressed as "Your Majesty."

When I consider the Thompson-and-Johnson hordes who have since invaded the romantic recesses of the Black Forest, — the Cantabs and Oxonians who have performed their vulgar equestrian exploits in the valley of the Murg, — the cockney picnics, the slang, the Holborn Hilllike attempts at fashion, which have vulgarized the spot to the level of Margate or Herne Bay, — I can scarcely bear to recall the season, when as much of Paris as did not follow the Duchesse de Berri to Dieppe, was sure to be found at Baden, — losing at Roulette all the rouleaux Frascati had spared; or in the intimacies created by private theatricals and *parties de campagne*, what remained of reputations worn wondrously thin and threadbare by the pranks of *le petit château*, or adventures at the *bal de l'opéra*.

I arrived there with Zriny; who, meeting me at Nancy on my road, rendered so desperate by Mrs. Hawley's departure that I was willing to plunge into champagne and *écarté* to an untold amount, proposed our performing together the rest of the journey. Luckily for me, he was in very sober mood; for had the heat of his Hungarian blood suggested any exploit likely to bring us into affray with the frontier authorities, I would have swum the Rhine with him, or hurled my case of Havannahs at the head of the Custom House officers, or defied the united squadrons of the Gross-Herzogliche army, with pleasure, as a mere outlet for the irritation of my spirits.

But, after all, tom-fooleries of this nature are far oftener executed with the vulgar ambition of astonishing, than from inclination or impulse. After seeing as much of the world as most men, I am as ready to attest that I never knew a man genuinely eccentric, as that I never heard an impromptu *bon mot*. I have lived among wits and "renowners:" but their sallies and sallyings-forth, were invariably the result of premeditation.

My first hint, on this subject, was from Prince Zriny himself; who stood too well in the world to care about standing better.

"For heaven's sake, don't throw your money about in that way!" cried he, on seeing me give a five-franc piece where a *fifth part* of it would have been over-payment. "You will be *taken for a* Russian prince, or some other primitive savage."

And, "for heaven's sake, don't drink your champagne out of a tumbler," said he, on another occasion, "or you will be taken for an Heidelberg student — a *Bursch*-ranger."

Just so had I been rebuked in London, by Charley Roxborough, when I made my first appearance, encrusted with Cantab-cubbishness; and endeavoured to witch the world with follies, pardonable only in first and second childhood, to beardless cornets, or grey-beard field marshals.

There was certainly some encouragement to follow Zriny's example in the eagerness with which he was welcomed by the charming young Duchesses and Countesses, the queens of Parisian fashion, to whom the *olskois* and *ilzoffs* and *itzins* annually assembled at Baden, were vainly addressing *billets doux*, sanded with diamond dust. — The "primitive savages," with their brigades of carriages, legions of servants, and interminable purses and mustachios, had not a chance against his easy self-confidence; and by the time he had called me "*ce pauvre Rott'slie*" two or three times in their presence, I was accepted as his Sancho Panza, — a harmless young Englishman of good family, the victim of a gigantic fortune and the spleen.

"You must grant your protection to my poor Rott'slie," said he, in presenting me to the Princesse Sabine de L—, one of the prettiest little coquettes of Faubourg St. Germain. "Rott'slie is dying of a surfeit of guineas. His English hypochondriacism is just now so strong upon him, that it is not without a shudder I see him look hard into a cutler's or apothecary's shop."

Thus announced, the dread of their ridicule naturally brightened my countenance. Even after learning from the Archdeacon on his return to Yorkshire, (Sir Robert, I suspect was too indignant to write) that little hope was entertained of Caroline Roxborough, and that Lord and Lady John Jocelyn were among the first to welcome Mrs. Hawley as a valuable addition to their neighbourhood, I overcame my feelings sufficiently to play the prompter while Zriny, the Princesse de L, — and Mademoiselle Mélanie de Bonval, were rehearsing the principal parts in *La Femme Chatte*. I cared as little to pass for the incarnation of a Frenchman's *beau idéal* of a rich Englishman, (*i. e.* an ass per-

petually on the verge of *felo-de-se*, from the disappointment of finding that enjoyment cannot be bought ticketed at a shop, like any other sort of goods in demand,) as to allow Zriny and his set to discover the extent of my astonishment at their sayings and doings.

After the rational sobriety of Monsieur Des Auliers' *bourgeois* circle, the dare-all recklessness of speech of my new friends amazed me not a whit the less for the quiet unconcern with which it was uttered. Instead of monstering nothings, *they* treated monstrosities *like* nothing.

I must say for the French — and precisely because it is in direct opposition with our street-corner notions of the French character — that all they say and do which would be better left unsaid and undone, passes in the quietest manner. No people are so easy to live with. No people are so little apt to make a fuss about trifles. On their social stage, there is no such thing as a flourish of trumpets. Whether their saints become sinners or their sinners saints, it is done without private outcry or public clamour. None of the mock indignations by which English society assigns itself a certificate of good morals! The only cant tolerated among them lies between a candidate and his college on the eve of an election; for the cogent reason that elsewhere and otherwise it does not "pay."

I will not deny that after the formalities of English life and the tameness of Les Epines, the facile irregularity of Parisian *bon ton* appeared exceedingly *piquant*. I had seen Zriny too well received by Albertine and Madame de Valmoré to doubt that his way of life was such as they approved; and not a little was I charmed to find myself free of a coterie where the manners and appearance of Charley Roxborough and his imitators would have been scouted as ultramontane.

It would be something, on my return to England, to have acquired a jargon he did not understand, and a *disinvoltura* as unattainable to his natural stiffness as the double *entrechats* of Didelot or Deshayes; with which view, I set about studying the shibboleth which was to assign me an advantage over him, as ardently as though reading for a degree.

I suppose I succeeded. By dint of employing the same

tradespeople, and parrot-ing his recklessness of diction and gesture, I contrived to produce much such a copy of Prince Zriny, as some worn-out lithograph affords of one of Van Dyck's *chefs-d'œuvre*. For I observed that Captain and Lady Mary de Vesci, who were among the few English staying at Baden, and who at first ceremoniously returned my bow, now averted their faces whenever I passed them; and as I did not *then* surmise that they were afraid of laughing in my face, I attributed Captain de Vesci's conduct to envy of the awkward boy to whose sister he had vainly paid his addresses.

But whatever my country people might think of me, foreigners were unanimous in favour of one who so promptly made their language and habits his own, and so readily made *theirs* his bank-notes and rouleaux. Charles Roxborough had taught me if I played like a fool, at least to lose like a gentleman; and I soon became a sort of pet in the circles frequented by Anton Zriny.

"*Je vous présente mon veau d'or!*" he used to say, in my presence to every new comer, with an off-hand frankness that rendered it impossible to take offence; and my good humour as a butt soon promoted me to higher privileges. I was selected by the Princess to make arrangements for her pic-nics. I was chosen as confidant to detain jealous husbands in the rear, when flirtations were going on in our riding-parties. I was even required to engage Mélanie de Bonval for six consecutive valses, that she might see no more than was indispensable of the flirtations of her *chaperon*. We made a sight-seeing expedition to Strasburg, in which I proved my genius in the commissariat line, by providing carriages and a banquet, against our arrival; when I was rewarded by loud exclamations from Zriny, the Princess, and Clermont Tonnerres, and La Tour Duplessis, without end, who were lounging and lunching at my expense. "*Ce brave Rott'slie,*" they protested, was worth his weight in gold.

It was soothing enough to become an object of envy to the *olskois*, and *ilzoffs*, and *ilzins*, who were not admitted to show so much as the tip of their caviar-smeared mustachios, among these brilliant Parisians! I was the only Englishman admitted to the *soirées* of the Grand-Duchess; and the good-humoured King of

Bavaria, whose jolly laugh reminded me of that of the Archdeacon, often congratulated Mélanie and her fair friends, on having at their disposal the *preux chevalier par excellence* of the place.

I could not but wish that Mrs. Hawley were able to see me the *fleur des pois* of a set she had herself described to me as uniting supremacy of fashion with the highest blood left unspilled by the revolution; and at length, on pretext of being uneasy at Sir Robert's prolonged silence, sat down one day and endited her a description of the pleasures and pastimes of Baden, as plentifully sprinkled over with the *beaux noms* of the *belles dames* of whom I fancied myself the chosen squire, as though I were the "own correspondent" of a Yankee newspaper. Duchesses and countesses slipped from my pen like pearls from a silken thread.

Of Yorkshire, according to the new tone I had adopted, I affected to talk patronizingly; trusting, "she was not dreadfully shocked by the rusticity of my country neighbours, or bored to extinction by their dulness." But they did not detain me long from Baden; on whose frivolities and scandals I dwelt as if of more moment than the highest interests of Church or State. Above all, I described the charms of Mélanie de Bonval, with a familiarity which might have excited jealous emotions in the bosom of a Semiramis; intending my correspondent to understand that the best *valseuse* of the Faubourg St. Germain, awaited only my nod to become Mrs. Wrottesley, of Wrottesley Hall.

So little, however, did I know of Mademoiselle de Bonval, as to be unaware that she united the attraction of great wealth, to that of the highest fashion. For she had a handsome brother holding a distinguished place among the flutterers of the court of *le petit château;* and, accustomed to the primogenital privileges of England, I forgot that, in the opulent families of modern France, a brother and sister are co-heirs; so that, innocently enough, I was conferring on myself the shame of an interested courtship. I could afford, however, to bear some blame, so overloaded was I with female trust and confidence; a distinction avoided like the plague by a Frenchman of the world, as defining him to be *un homme sans conséquence* — an object of jealousy to *no mortal breathing.*

One evening, on our way back to our hotel, to drink tea with Princess Hetzenheim, a friend of Madame de L —, after sauntering in and out of the public ball-room only to mark our scorn of the mixed company inevitable at bathing places, — I was discussing with Zriny and La Tour Duplessis a pic-nic to take place on the morrow, in the Gardens of the *Favorite;* to do honour to which, I had been numskull enough to send to Paris and Frankfort for all the delicacies of the season, and out of season, so as to distance the gorgeous but grosser entertainments devised by the *olskois*, *ilzoffs*, and *itzins*.

"*Entre nous*, my dear Rott'slie," cried La Tour Duplessis, "we are sure of something more attractive than either *langoustes*, or *ortolans*, or *vin de paille*. To-day's post brought me a letter from Nestor Platicheff; and he and D'Estomont will be here to-night."

"In time to be cooked for to-morrow?" said I, — for he seemed to class them among the eatables.

"As they left Paris yesterday at noon," he rejoined, "travellers in such weather ought to arrive ready grilled. But under any circumstances, Mélanie and Princess Hetzenheim will find them perfectly palatable.

"I do not know D'Estomont," said I, peevish at finding two of my choicest patronesses thus coolly appropriated.

"Not know D'Estomont? — You must be joking!" exclaimed both my companions.

"D'Estomont is as well known from one end of Europe to the other as Jean Maria Farina," added Zriny. "You *must* have seen him at Paris!"

On which, heartily ashamed of my ignorance, I stammered out that "I was not aware they alluded *that* D'Estomont!" which satisfied them; — more particularly as we were now at the Princess's door, where half-a-dozen pretty women and a mediatized Prince or two awaited our coming, to commence what are called (ironically I presume when played outside the door of a nursery) *les jeux innocens*. If certain of our forfeits were innocent, I should like to know what is considered guilty!

We played so late, or rather the men sat up smoking together

so late after the fair forfeit-players had separated for the night, that I woke next day only in time to learn that the *comestibles* had made their appearance, and were off in a covered van to the Favoriten Schloss, under the superintendence of Félix my courier; with some chance, as it was a burning day at the close of August, that the contents of the hampers were already in as complete a state of dissolution as the confederation of the Rhine.

It was pleasant enough, while arranging into irresistibility the folds of my tie, to be interrupted by the arrival of little scented billets, demanding answers to questions which rendered reply impossible; fussy little missives, delivered by heyducks and chasseurs nearer seven feet high than six, — the giants who have succeeded to the pretty pages once attendant on a lady's bower. One offered me a seat in her calèche; another asked for a place in mine; a third insisted on my driving her in her husband's phaeton; while a fourth proposed, as the pleasantest thing in the world under a sun calculated to produce Hochheimer and Johannesberg of a vintage rivalling the comet growth, an equestrian progress to the Favorite, on worn-out hacks and the dusty *chaussée* of a public road! —

Every billet was in turn read, answered, and locked in my travelling desk; and had any one asked me whether I had patience to receive such flummering appeals to my sensibilities as the *petit poulet* of Madame von Hetzenheim, I would have replied with Rosalind, — "Ay! and twenty such!"

But luckily my looking-glass alone was witness of the Malvolio-like smile with which I completed my toilet. When I proceeded in my britska to take up Zriny and La Tour Duplessis, — who, on the plea of wishing to smoke, had declined accompanying their belles, and thus procured me the shower of notes which had fallen on my head, — I felt as like "young Harry with his beaver up," or young Ammon preparing to vault upon Bucephalus, as if Hotspur lay dead or the world in chains, at my feet!

Having already taken on myself a bachelor's privilege of whispering in the ear of my lovely (ass that I am! I was about to write lov-*ing*) country-women, — I assume it once more, and *for a last time*, to observe that, when English ladies get up a pic-

nic, their first care is their dress. When gown, bonnet, and sash are fixed upon, they conceive the preliminaries adjusted. But far different is the case with foreigners, who are unquestionably greater adepts in infusing spirit into the diversions of life. *Their* day of pleasure must be a joint-stock company concern. Every body is to be in good humour, and endeavour to promote the good humour of the rest. Attempts to outshine, or cut out, would destroy the harmony of the party. The admiration must be as equitably shared as the game pies and champagne.

My beauties, for beauties they were, had not added a flower or a flounce to their every-day attire. It would have made them neither happier nor merrier to be a little finer than usual. On the contrary, the child-like simplicity of a Frenchwoman's summer toilet, which soap and water suffices to renovate, opposes no obstacle to rural pleasures; and they are content to find seats on rock or greensward, — even though the sward be dusty and the rock green, — without exhibiting the fastidious antics which so often render ridiculous a pic-nic of English fashionables.

We arrived late at the Favorite; for a basket of fruit had been forgotten, which Zriny's factotum insisted on placing in the boot of our carriage: the manœuvres to effect which arrangement detained us so long, that we were compelled to swallow the dust left flying on the road by our predecessors.

Apparently, they had not missed us. Long before we reached the *bosquet* where the table was spread, the merriment of the assembled *convives* reached our ears. They were laughing so heartily, that, with the petulance of a narrow mind, I fancied we must be the subjects of their mirth. And for once I was right.

"Behold them!" cried the voice of Nestor Platicheff, addressing the Princesse de L—, as we made our appearance! "Behold them, and our Vatel's life is saved! Let him know that he need not fall upon his carving knife till the next pic-nic. My dear Rott'slie," continued he, "our trust is in *you!* Baptiste has just informed us that unless your carriage is packed with peaches, grapes, and melons, we may look to the brambles in the hedges for our dessert."

True to my English characteristics, I was half inclined to be

huffy at this free and easy apostrophe. But Zriny caught the ball and threw it back to him, by protesting that, aware of his arrival, we had judged it superfluous to purvey for the party. "Where *you* are present, my dear Nestor," said he, "nothing short of nectar and ambrosia will go down."

They all laughed heartily, — because prepared by good humour and fine weather to laugh at whatever came uppermost. But the confusion produced by our *entrée* rendered impossible the introduction to Nestor's travelling companion, for which I had prepared myself; and till we took our places at table in the snug green nook, which borrowed a thousand charms by contrast with the dusty road we had been traversing, I saw nothing of him but the back of an admirably well-made coat worn by an admirably well-made man. Of the light of his countenance, no one had just then the benefit but Mélanie de Bonval, to whom he was addressing assiduous homage.

Already, I began to feel uncomfortable. A certain uneasy consciousness apprized me that I was in the presence of one who had the mastery over me. Self-satisfied as I had been the preceding night, I suddenly recollected my scarcity of years, whiskers, and knowledge of the world. How much more when, just as my plate of *bisque d'écrevisses* was placed before me, a glance towards the place occupied by Mademoiselle de Bonval, convinced me that I had indeed seen at Paris "the well-known D'Estomont;" who was no other than the handsome individual I had observed seated behind Mrs. Hawley at the opera, and whom I afterwards noticed dashing along the Sceaux road, with Nestor Platicheff by his side.

The man seemed fated to be my evil genius! Already, I was indebted to him for *one* uncomfortable evening; and the attention directed towards him from every part of the dinner-table, while he poured his gay nonsense into the willing ear of Mélanie, convinced me, sorely against my will, that, for the remainder of his stay, I was fated to play Violino 2^{0}.

Condemned alas! to restrict *my* attentions to Madame von Hetzenheim, the audacious Parisian's endeavour to charm re*sembled a distant* display of fireworks; *i. e.*, every now and then

a vague effusion of light, followed by the loud applause of the bystanders; and like a country actor, when a star arrived from London brings down the house in his line of parts, I could have eaten the interloper!

Charles the Fifth is said to have endured more vexation, in his monastery in Estremadura, from the difficulty of making twenty or thirty clocks and watches keep time together, than he had experienced in producing unanimity in his factious Imperial Council Chamber. But had the *ci-devant* Emperor ever attempted to keep in charity with each other half a dozen jealous rivals, he would have thought less of the discordance of the watches. In the instance in question, I admit being as eager to get up a quarrel, no matter with whom, as might have done honour to the county of Tipperary.

The expressive phrase of having "*le vin mauvais*," for which I know no politer translation than the "pure English undefiled" of Elizabethan time, of being "sulky in one's cups," has been so often applied to me in the course of my life, that I fear I must plead guilty to being a disagreeable fellow after a few extra glasses of wine. But the champagne that rendered me sullen, made D'Estomont what drink made Lady Macbeth, — "bold;" and amidst the singing in my ears and promiscuous rattle of plates, knives, forks, and glasses mingled with laughter and popping of corks, which create so strange a confusion in the faculties of a man who is getting bosky, I could single out the rich and varied tones of his voice as he recounted anecdote after anecdote, and hazarded jest after jest, — like a well-graced actor, certain of himself and his audience.

I could not, however, so much as man a rush against the breast of my rival. I had thrown myself thoroughly out of the lists. The slightest attempt to put lance in rest, or even foot in stirrup, would have flung me discountenanced to the ground.

"But Rott'slie? Where 's Rott'slie? I don't hear the voice of Rott'slie!" cried Zriny, as he divided a third peach with Princess Hetzenheim, — either because, remembering how hard I had laboured to obtain the applause of the Athenians in gathering together the materials of the feast, he felt a little compunction at

my being so totally eclipsed in my sphere,—or perhaps, because himself a little jealous of the sudden favour achieved by D'Estomont. But I did not thank him for thus directing attention towards me; for the new-comer, on hearing me addressed, glanced along the table with the sort of abhorrent indulgence with which people look under it when the master of the house calls to his dog lying in ambush among their legs; till, his eyes having rested on my stultified face, he whispered something to Mélanie to which she audibly replied, "*Mais non! mais non!*" probably because he accused me of being something the worse for a succession of bumpers.

A moment afterwards, the feast being at an end, we were all on foot; treading on air, as one does when rising from a foreign dinner, and much in the condition of school-boys rushing forth from durance at their play-hour. I doubt, indeed, whether the smallest dame-school that turns out its pinafored urchins on a village green, ever supplied children more bent on mischief than the members of an aristocratic pleasure party in the full exuberance of champagne.

Unluckily, there was a gardener's ladder lying at hand, left by the men employed to suspend coloured lamps in the bosquets. With this, the only implement at hand, the Prinz von Hetzenheim, Zriny, and one or two of the more athletic men present, began a course of gymnastics; till lo! a sudden "coquerico" from a neighbouring tree having caused us to look up, we were startled by the sight of Nestor Platicheff pretending to clap his wings in triumph, some twenty feet above our heads.

Of course it became necessary for those who were further gone in champagne than himself, to accomplish double the ascent. Hetzenheim clambered to the upper branches of a beech-tree to look down upon us, where his flaxen hair and beard exhibited a strange resemblance to a Polar bear; while Zriny, dapper and agile as a monkey, clung from bough to bough till he overtopped him. At every fresh feat, new cries of delight arose from the knot of foolish women gathered below.

Was it to be expected that I should content myself to remain *the only blockhead of the* party unapplauded? The moment Pla-

ticheff (who had commenced this stupid mode of recreation) descended from his tree, I advanced to take his place; and like Hetzenheim, commenced operations by throwing off my coat.

"Interfere, my dear Princess, interfere!" said D'Estomont, in an audible whisper. "Mr. Wrottesley is not in a state to be foot-sure."

But the Princess only laughed the louder, at the idea of seeing a man who was scarcely able to stand on *terra firma*, attempting to find footing on branches hardly strong enough to support a sparrow; while Mélanie de Bonval betted aloud that I should not reach the fork of the tree attained with ease by my friend Nestor.

The consequence was, that with eyes blinded by rage and Fissefraiquin, and hands relaxed by the swimming of my brains, I managed to scramble some fifteen feet higher than had been accomplished by Platicheff. The last thing I remember discerning from my giddy perch, was the insulting attitude of D'Estomont, as he pointed out to the treacherous Mélanie, seated on a *banc de gazon* the better to enjoy the scene, the clumsy distortions by which I was trying to secure my footing. The next thing I heard was the crashing of the branches, as I fell through them to the ground; which the horrified bystanders, who found me insensible at the foot of the tree, bleeding from ears, and nose, and mouth, conceived to be the crashing of my bones.

It must be admitted that the next of kin of Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley, Esq., of Wrottesley Hall, had at that moment a parlous chance of succeeding to his undevised estate! —

CHAPTER XXVIII.

My revenge
Was born in laughter. But it will endure
Like oaks which, born in May, seem slight and weak,
But, having a score of winters on their heads,
Grow strong and rugged. PROCTOR.

As my gentle public, even allowing it the utmost exercise of novel-reading credulity, cannot doubt my being alive at this present writing, it were mere waste of time and ink to endeavour to get up a panic.

Suffice it, therefore, that I was "scotch'd, not killed," — or rather "kilt," not "killed;" — and that the eminent surgeon to whose attendance I was conveyed back by Zriny and my servants as fast as horses could lay legs to the ground, pronounced that no man alive could have accomplished a fall of five-and-thirty feet more judiciously. The crashing branches had broken my fall instead of my limbs; and the extensive hemorrhage neutralized the previous excess of champagne. Quiet and complete seclusion were prescribed; and in a week or ten days, I was to be as well as ever, provided I led an unmolested life.

This was signified to me when I woke next morning after a heavy sleep produced by opiates, with a splitting head-ache and every bone in my frame aching. But the cure was scarcely more palatable than the disease; so greatly was my detestation of the insolent D'Estomont aggravated by fever and opium. — All night, I had seemed to see him whispering into the small white ear of Mélanie; and I doubt whether the Moor who haunted the visions of the English opium-eater constituted a more persevering nightmare. The thought of his scornful smile, while I sat perched like Maître Corbeau in my tree, disposed me to "kill, kill, kill," as blood-thirstily as Lear: small-swords, pistols, blunderbusses, — I cared not what, — must give vent to the ill-blood that raged between us. I had seen the fellow hang over the graceful shoulder of Albertine; — I had seen him provoke against me the shrugging shoulders of Mélanie; — I had seen him sneer at the cut of my coat, and my own cut when uncoated; — and nothing short of seeing him measure the ground at my feet as *I* had measured it at *his*, would satiate my feverish fury.

I had fortunately a reasonable being to deal with in Zriny. Promising me I should fight as soon as I was well enough, — as the surest way of making me well, — he readily engaged himself to be my second; convinced that, on dismissing the surgeon, I should be in no hurry to return into his hands. I had previously exacted a promise that no one would alarm my friends in England, by announcing an accident which my medical attendants *declared would* have no injurious results; and so strictly did I

observe the regimen prescribed, that, at the close of a week, I actually crossed my bed-room with as firm a step as Achilles.

During these eight tedious days, my friends did not forget me. — Half-a-dozen *femmes-de-chambre* — black, white, and grey — grey, white, and black, — made their appearance in succession at my door, at first with little flummering messages, at last with little flummering notes; — princesses, countesses, and Mélanies, accusing themselves *à l'envie l'une de l'autre*, of having prompted or sanctioned my imprudent exploits: — all, miserable at my sufferings — all, living only in the hope of my convalescence. For women, French women in particular, dearly love a sensation; and my disaster rendered me for a time the lion of the party.

But the person who did not restrict his attention to flummering notes or catechising my courier, was Zriny. Every day, he spent some hours in my room; smoking, while he listened to my bold disjointed chat; and when he laid aside his cigar to take his turn of talking, relating stories such as might have made the Grand Turk laugh himself into hysterics with listening to. He was the very fellow for a sick-room, where, as in my case, the sickness held out no perspective of black crape and broad hems; and it was to him far more than the doctors I felt indebted for my recovery, when, on the tenth day, I was ordered to exchange chicken-broth for Markbrünner, and make a farewell bow to my doctors.

"And now, my dear Zriny," said I, when, half an hour afterwards, he shook me by the hand in gratulation on my convalescence; "now, at least, you will make no further objection to carry a message for me to D'Estomont?"

"Not the slightest," he replied, "if you will tell me where I am likely to find him."

"At the Badische Hof. He and Nestor Platicheff lodge in adjoining rooms."

"Not just now, I fancy!" rejoined the Prince, shaping the points of his moustachios. "Nestor is off for St. Petersburg; where an uncle, or a grandfather, or a something, has been considerate enough to die and leave him an estate of five thousand serfs."

"But D'Estomont —"

"Is by this time either across the Simplon, or in Scotland, or at Lisbon, or on his road to the moon; for he seemed sadly uncertain whither to direct his steps when he started from hence two days ago."

"This is treachery indeed!" cried I, with unassumed indignation. "Did you not give me your solemn promise to —"

"Aid and abet you in calling to account one of my intimate friends, as soon as you felt your arm strong enough to cut his throat? — Certainly! But it is no fault of mine that he sets off upon his travels on a Tuesday, when it is not till Thursday your sword-arm comes into murdering condition. I did my best to promote a little homicide, by my endeavours to restore you to health. But one would think that Mélanie de Bonval had an intuitive knowledge of your intentions; for nothing, — not even an invitation for to-morrow from the grand-duchess, — would induce her to stay another day."

"They are gone together, then!" cried I, with increasing warmth.

"Fie, fie! — The Princess and her fair friend have returned most decorously to Paris; while D'Estomont, who is endowed with the bump of decorum, for which your countrymen are so remarkable, took an opposite direction. You Englishmen take as much care of your reputations as a beauty of her complexion; for in England, the newspapers and hustings render character a marketable commodity."

"I trust," was my indignant rejoinder, "that we are susceptible to influences somewhat less sordid. But what have England and the English in common with Mademoiselle de Bonval's admirer?"

"Why, you do not pretend ignorance that D'Estomont is your countryman?"

"As Mrs. Hawley is my countrywoman, perhaps, — from being born during the emigration of her family!"

"By birth, breeding, and ancestry — by every thing, in short, *but habits* and inclination

Sparta hath many a worthier son than he!"

cried I. "Great Britain can dispense with the worshipped and worshipful Monsieur D'Estomont. But how came he by his French birth — or rather, by his French name?"

"There is nothing French in his name, except our mispronunciation," retorted Zriny. "Some of these days he is to be a *milor*, or something of that description; *titré*, at all events."

"Lord D'Estomont!" said I, laughing heartily at the notion. "Yet why not, as well as 'De' any thing else! — Of late we have had wondrous batches of new peers; and the King threatens to ennoble his physician and banker's clerk, if certain duchesses who delight in snubbing the upstart favourites of the royal cottage, persist in their airs."

"Assure yourself, however," persisted Zriny, "that D'Estomont's rank, whatever it may be, if not quite equal to that of the Montmorencys, is not a thing of yesterday. I remember, one day, when we were all bragging, his telling us that his family left Normandy with the Conqueror; and that *his* branch, which is a junior one, was ennobled by the Stuarts."

"*D'Estomont!*" said I, musing aloud, as if trying to revive my peerage reminiscences.

"Or more properly, I believe, De Stomont," resumed Zriny. "But you must have seen his card. For though he sent daily to inquire, I know he called in person to leave his P. P. C."

An appeal to the servant produced the voucher in question.

"Stormont! — Reginald Stormont! What an ass have I been!" cried I.

"Yes. — De Stomont — Reginald de Stomont!" repeated Zriny, fancying our pronunciation exactly the same, — and adding the "De" as a necessary adjunct of nobility.

"If I had but known it from the first!" I exclaimed. "Stormont is an intimate friend of my family! — The uncle to whose title he is to succeed is their nearest country neighbour."

"Which accounts for his knowledge of your name and connections. The night of your accident, before we were certain of the extent of the mischief, he mentioned that, if you died, your sisters would become two of the wealthiest co-heiresses in England."

This reference to my sisters carried me back involuntarily to Reginald Stormont's flirtation with Dora; and though I had never understood the truth of the business, and am well aware that in nine cases out of ten where a man is said to behave ill, his misbehaviour consists in disappointing expectations for which he afforded no foundation, my desire to make an end of Albertine's and Mademoiselle de Bonval's admirer acquired new vigour from the discovery that he had been also the admirer of my sister; and that, knowing my name, he had not been at the pains to know more of me, by asking an introduction.—I was terribly nettled.

"And now, my dear Rott'slie, not to lose time in dwelling on what affords far from pleasant reminiscences," said Zriny, "listen to my new projects. — I need not tell you that I declined the proposal of our friends that I should accompany them on their journey, from not choosing to leave you alone here —"

"Most kindly and considerately," cried I.

"No, most *justly!* I consider myself in some degree responsible for an accident which, soberer than yourself, I should have interfered to prevent. But no more on that chapter. I have it at heart that you should forthwith accompany me to Hungary."

"To *Hungary?*"

"To my father's, at Lyarák; where I am going to enjoy a few weeks' *battues;* after which, we will return together to Paris. You have no settled plans, and mean to wander about till Christmas; — I can promise you good entertainment for man and horse as far as November."

Though longing to revert to Stormont and my grievances, I stood too much in awe of Zriny's raillery, and was too much indebted to his kindness to indulge my ill-temper. And where would have been the use of endeavouring to track the peregrinations of a man quite as likely to be on his road to the Caucasus, as to the heights of Montmartre? With as good a grace as I could muster, therefore, I accepted Zriny's proposition; and in the course of a few days, was judged strong enough for the journey.

How often have I heard it asserted among my countrymen, that the name of Englishman carries with it on the road a charm *which causes horses* to fly, and landlords to kneel! Yet as far

as my experience is concerned, I never found a foreign-office passport of any avail except in influencing the sum total of my bill! On the contrary, after exploring almost every country in Europe, and some out of it, I have no hesitation in saying that, among the lower classes, — the classes with which travelling brings one in contact, — the name of Englishman suffices to provoke animosity and ill-will. It may have been otherwise in former days. But John Bull now prides himself on reform and economy, as much as formerly on lavish openness of hand; and John Bull's footmen and lady's maids, by their insolent airs and exactions, — their outcries after Warren's blacking and Cheshire cheese, — have made the high roads of the world too hot to hold him. He is forced to wait for his dinner while less peremptory foreigners are served; and finds inferior rooms assigned him merely to spite the serving-men whose road, from Dan to Beersheba, is a succession of dammees.

I was made especially sensible of this by the pleasantness of my journey with Zriny. As he was naturally the spokesman of the party, it could only be his gentlemanly frankness, differing as widely from the dry *hauteur* of the high-bred Englishman as from the facetious familiarity of the low-bred, which procured us such prompt attention, such excellent service, and charges less by half than awaited the per centage of my courier. With Zriny, no one took liberties, — with Zriny, no one ventured on imposition. — He spoke their language, and bore a name familar to them; which made his word a law.

We spent a week in Vienna; and though to my friendly companion I expressed only my admiration of the best *corps de ballet* I had ever seen, embellished by the Ellslers in their girlhood and Brugnoli in her zenith, and my enthusiasm for the wild sallies of Therese Krones and her phantasmagoric crew, I may be permitted to confide to my public that I was grievously disappointed. I had expected grandeur, antiquity, and Gothic quaintness, in the city of modern Cæsars; and found only a less brilliant Paris, — a Paris such as existed at the accession of Louis the Fifteenth. Nothing distinctive about it; — nothing, (with the exception of a singularly uxorious sepulchral

ment,) to remind one of Maria Theresa, or of the heroic Vienna that bad defiance to Turkey and her scymitars.

At that season of the year, the shores of the Danube were as dull as those of the Thames: even the fine palaces of the suburbs being deserted by the Austrian nobles whose place in the aristocracy of Europe is so imposing, for their hunting seats in Bohemia, Styria, or Hungary; and I soon became as impatient as Zriny to start for the forests.

I did not, of course, fail to make fuss enough about the misery of a shooting expedition without my paraphernalia; and would fain have despatched an express from Baden to Yorkshire for my gun-cases and the countless etcetera supplied by Nock and Manton for the encumberment of sporting life. But Zriny laughed so heartily at the idea of being dependent on one's gun, and promised so stoutly that his father's armoury a Lyarák should supply me with what was far better calculated for the sport we were about to engage in than London gunsmith ever devised, that I was fain to be content.

Of all the men I ever met with, Anton Zriny was the one who had the readiest faculty of persuading me, without leaving me humiliated by the consciousness of having given in. Precisely because there was no *arrière-pensée* in him! He used only straight forward arguments, from having no ulterior object. *His* high-breeding was not like Charley Roxborough's, the result of a well-modulated voice, a graceful bow, a well-tied cravat, and well varnished boots; but the candour of an honourable nature, standing in a good position, and living only among his equals. It is the fusion of classes which begets, in English society, those two most vulgar of vulgar errors, — insolence from high to low, and toadyism from low to high: — exclusivism and finery, like other offensive things which shall be nameless, being nuisances of London growth.

I had communicated from Baden with Gripham and Co., requiring them to forward me to Vienna a letter of credit for a thousand pounds, in terms which, from a young man within four months of attaining his majority, it would not have been *safe for attorneys* desiring to retain his practice to neglect; and I

consequently turned my face towards Hungary in the overflowing spirits apt to accompany, in extreme youth, an overflowing purse. Neither the health of Caroline Roxborough, — the flagitious conduct of her brother, — the indignation of Sir Robert Hawley, or the instalment of Albertine at the Chase, — weighed much upon the mind of one who was proceeding to his first campaign in boar-hunting, in a new country, among new faces, with one of the pleasantest companions in the world.

I then looked upon Hungary as I now look upon Japan; as a country full of interest, which I was as little likely to visit as if situated in the planet Mars. For as yet, steam-boats on the Danube not only were not, but had been pronounced impossible, by legions of engineers who wasted the substance of the Prince de Montfort in endeavouring to establish them. And to attempt to enter Hungary by any other means than water-carriage, it required to be born an Esterhazy or a Sandor: the high road between Vienna and Pesth being the only one acknowledged by any vehicle of higher pretensions than a pack-waggon. Now-a-days that Murray's Guide Book, abetted by railroads and steam-boats, conveys a man from China to Peru without difficulty, and above all carries him through Hungary as easily as the post conveys a stamped letter from Piccadilly to Newington Butts, I can scarcely account for the state of excitement with which I caught sight of the gilded steeples of Presburg, — the seat of the lordly Diet of the most chivalrous country of modern times.

My notions of geography being as vague as those of most well-educated young Englishmen, I had always so incorporated the notion of Hungary with that of the Carpathian mountains, (which in the cheap school maps in use at Eagle House were pourtrayed as a very black range of mole-hills running straight across the kingdom,) that I expected to find the majestic Danube flowing between barriers of rocks, like the Rhine above Coblentz; and great was my disappointment on perceiving an illimitable plain extended before me, like fifty Salisburys rolled into one; or rather like the least picturesque portions of Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, or Cambridge. Every now and then, the roofs of a village peeping above its surrounding pollards, with the

uniformity of a Moravian establishment or some model town of the United States, reminded one of the Dutch villages of our toy shops. But I looked long and vainly for Baronial Castles frowning in the midst of gloomy forests, as in the days of Ragótski. Tekeli, I saw, was a mere melodrame, one of the numerous hoaxes of Theodore Hook; and Hungary, after all, as flat as if viewed from Tilbury Fort. The only remarkable object that met my eye, was the one which induced Voltaire's traveller to pronounce himself *en pays civilisé; — i. e.*, a permanent stone gallows at the entrance of every town.

Would that those who invented the roads and the system of travelling by *vorspann* had been hanged upon them! Not because I was fresh from the luxurious transit of the great North road. Had I come straight from the log roads of Connecticut or Red Russia, I should not the less have sworn at the huge holes into which, at the risk of breaking our springs and bones, every now and then the carriage floundered, as worthy of a country still subject to the *corvée*.

Nay, I doubt whether Sir Gratian Roxborough, or his son, or any other pig-headed tory of my acquaintance would not have abated a jot his love of absolutism, after witnessing the evils inflicted upon the poor peasants compelled to provide horses for the convenience of our journey; and the injury to the commonweal produced by our exemption, and the exemption of all travellers of noble blood, from the tollage or taxation indispensable to the maintenance of public roads.

I suppose it was to divert my attention from the nakedness of the land, that Zriny composed my spirits by the most delicious Turkish tobacco I ever smoked, and a series of anecdotes as wild as if invented by Hoffmann: — national legends that might have put to the blush the wildest imaginings of our bogs or highlands. Once indeed, when, as we approached a village we were accosted, I might almost say attacked, by a troop of half-naked *Zigeuner*, he observed: "this must remind you of Ireland? In many things, our poor vice-regalized kingdom only too strongly resembles Ireland!" But in general he seemed to take no *heed of the defe*atures and deficiencies of the land of his fathers.

But as he had visited England so as to be fully cognizant of the luxurious refinement of our Belvoirs and Goodwoods, and yet abstained as we approached his father's estate from saying; "You must not expect to find at Lyarák, the comfort of your English *vie de château,*" I fully prepared myself for a grand mansion of freestone, largely supplied with hunting-stables, stair-carpets, new novels and fish sauces, according to the approved pattern of Wrottesley Hall or Hawley Chase.

Never, however, since my disappointment at Crowsden Grange, had I found myself more out in my calculations! Lyarák was an enormous building of whitewashed brick, standing in a moat, and strongly resembling a county Bridewell, before Bridewell architecture became a matter of prizes and premiums. Occupying three sides of a square, the central courtwas of loose sandy shingle; nor, for some acres round the house, was a tree higher than a furze-bush to be seen.

For protection against the *ferœ naturæ* of those vast hunting grounds, the environs of the house were "cleared" in a style a Kentuckian would have applauded!

A walled garden with a single small and ill-built forcing-house, constituted the pleasance. Beyond, all was plain and forest, forest and plain, interspersed with hamlets, inhabited by the keepers and trackers of Prince Zriny; who, as far as the eye could reach, exercised autocratic authority.

Within what, by the courtesy of the country, was called a Castle, all was as barrack-like as without. Ill-painted wainscot and ill-white washed walls, ornamented here and there with ill-proportioned bas-reliefs whitewashed or rather yellow-washed like the rest, pervaded the vast mansion; with the exception of the state-rooms, hung with faded damask, and scantily filled with meagre furniture of the last century. An enormous hall, on whose walls trophies of antlers and boars' heads were divided by gun-racks and stands of arms, occupied the central ground-floor, and admitted the winds of Heaven to the vast staircase and roomy corridors above; the floors of which seemed to have been guiltless of scrubbing brush or dry-rubbing brush, for as many centuries as the house had been standing.

Even in the state apartments, with the exception of a small sitting-room called by Princess Zriny her boudoir, not a carpet was to be seen; and as a breezy October had now set in, I felt so strongly on my arrival, the want of such comforts or of a fire to supersede them, that I contrived to ascertain from the seneschal or groom of the chambers that, of thirty bed-chambers, only six were *pièces à feu.* Intended for summer residence, the chateaux of nearly the whole continent will be found in a similar predicament.

I had already begun to grumble at not having been warned to prepare myself with fleecy hosiery for Lyarák, as for an Arctic expedition: when, on assembling for the first day's dinner, the primitive but noble style of hospitality of the old Prince impressed me with a wholly new view of the place. I forgot that there were no bells in the house, — I forgot the shivering operation of my toilet, — on seeing the great fire-place of the grand old hall piled up with blazing logs that might have roasted a baron of beef; while sconces along the walls sent forth the solemn gleam of a succession of huge tapers, calculated to do honour to a cathedral.

The servants in attendance were about as numerous as the guests, — who were above thirty in number; and being chiefly heyducks, wearing the uniform of their respective masters, they imparted an almost military aspect to the Hall. With respect to the banquet, served in ponderous dishes of silver like every thing else at Lyarák sadly wanting in polish and evidently unconscious of the touch of a plate brush, it was of a somewhat Homerian nature; and brought forcibly to my mind the line of Pope,

Give me, ye gods! a whole hog barbecued!

Such monstrous fishes from the river Theiss, — such joints of beef and boar, — such wild turkeys and capercailzies, — such covies of partridges and leashes of pheasants! —

Between the strangely accoutred domestics in attendance, the noise of the guests redoubled by a domed ceiling, the flagons of Ofener wine as bright as a ruby, and Nessmühler as clear as a chrysolite, served in sufficient abundance to float the hall, I *could have almost* fancied myself assisting at some festival of the

middle ages, held at the court of the Dukes of Burgundy or Matthias Corvinus.

There needed not, however, a nobler presence to preside over the repast than that of Prince Zriny; the grey-haired father of my friend; by whom I was welcomed with open arms, as a stranger within his gates introduced there by his beloved Anton. The Princess, fifty years of age, and consequently more than thirty his junior, differed little from the *grandes dames* of other countries. — Having been treated by her husband, from the time of their marriage, as a child compared with himself, she had some excuse for still deporting herself as a young woman; though the presence of her three handsome daughters might have suggested to a wiser mind, that the time was come for covering her hair with a coif and her shoulders with a shawl. The two eldest, indeed, married to Hungarian nobles of the highest descent, had already assumed a more matronly aspect than herself. But it was for the sake of the youngest, the bewitching Princess Crescentia, that I felt vexed to notice so much that was risible in the *minauderies* of the superannuated coquette.

"I present you to my sister Crescentia," had been my friend Anton's unceremonious introduction as we were awaiting, in the dim old carpetless saloon, the announcement of dinner; "who, having never seen a live Englishman before, is naturally curious to ascertain whether you resemble the great Marlbrook, or wear turned-down collars like Byron. Be kind enough to talk a little English to her at dinner, when you must sit by her side, and as near my father as you can; — for, as his spoiled child, he is miserable when she is out of his sight."

"You speak English then?" said I, eagerly addressing the lovely girl whose cheeks were suffused by a vivid blush by her brother's abruptness.

"Don't ask her, — of course her modesty will say no!" cried Anton, patting her affectionately on the shoulder. — "But if she can't, it is to the eternal disgrace of her English master who, as long as I can remember, has never been many days out of our house."

And speak it I found she did; not with the fluency of Alber-

tine, but with a discretion that showed the literature of the language to be familiar to her; thus creating an unacknowledged tie between us which rendered me far more at home with *her* than with others of the party.

After dinner, from the dessert of which, (though rendered a little uproarious by the joy of Anton's unexpected arrival, and the consequent ceremony of toasts,) the men and women rose together, we repaired to the saloon; and half an hour afterwards, a band of less than *médiocre* musicians, attired in the Prince's uniform, struck up a polonaise as the signal for parading in couples round the great hall, already cleared from the remnants of the feast, up the grand staircase, along the half-lighted corridors and down again; either by way of exercise to assist our digestion, or as an opening for the ball.

As a matter of course, I danced with Princess Crescentia, who waltzed as Austrians and Hungarians alone can waltz; and when one of her brothers-in-law, Count Zichy, took her from my arm for a single turn, I had an opportunity of admiring as a spectator the light steadiness of her step as well as the extreme grace of her figure. A long swan-like throat, and the smallest head I ever saw bound round with simple bands of hair as black as jet, assigned her a far more distinguished appearance than the most fashionable of the fair *Parisiennes* whom, at Baden, I had pronounced supreme.

But what charmed me in the young Princess still more than her beauty, was the total absence of art in her words, movements, and ideas. Mrs. Hawley was an unaffected woman. But in *her* deportment you could trace the influence of early care and deference to the caprices of others. You could not converse with her without perceiving that, at one time or other, she had resided under an alien roof, or among those of whose kindness she was not perfectly assured: whereas Crescentia was like a flower such as one sees expand in some sequestered spot; with nothing but sunshine overhead, — nothing but shelter and security around. Whatever she said or did, was preassured of approval. Instead of the varied intonation which imparts to a *woman not* sure of herself and others, an appearance of hy-

pocrisy, I doubt whether Princess Crescentia Zriny ever altered the tone of her voice to address any mortal breathing. Save when on her knees to Heaven, what ear was there which it behoved her to propitiate!

"You must not fall in love with my little sister, my dear Rott'slie!" said Prince Anton, drawing me laughingly aside by my coat sleeve, on noticing the moonstruck air with which I stood gazing on her flying footsteps. "In the first place, because she is affianced to a nephew of my mother, — the owner of the most glorious stud and finest *puszta* in Hungary; in the second, because, even if free, my father is so wildly on horseback upon his nationality, that I believe he would rather see any one of his children made into mincemeat, than married to a foreigner, — no matter of what country or rank, — royal, serene, or simple. The Emperor of Russia himself would sue in vain for the hand of one of my sisters."

"A feeling which I honour!" cried I. "You must be proud to feel yourself the son of one of the last patriots of Hungary."

"I would fain have abated his patriotism a trifle three weeks ago, however," cried Anton, "when within a hair's-breadth of falling in love with Mélanie de Bonval; and kept clear of the scrape only by endeavouring to fancy every time I approached her, an effigy of my father set up as a sort of scare-cupid between us."

"*You* in love with Mélanie de Bonval?" I exclaimed, as if waking from a trance.

"*Noch eins!*" exclaimed he, shrugging his shoulders. "Why not I, as well as the rest. — From the moment you nearly broke your neck in birdsnesting, however, I recovered the infinitesimal morsel of my heart of which she had robbed me. The heartless manner in which I saw her coquetting with D'Estomont —"

"With Stormont —"

"With Stormont, (is that right?) effected my cure at once. But, to return to my sister Cressy. — I informed her when I presented you to her before dinner, that you were passionately in love with a countrywoman of your own, (as you owned to me

after a third bottle of champagne t'other night at Munich) and you therefore know to what to attribute her unreserve. She looks upon you as a married man."

Though I considered Zriny officiously prompt in his announcement, it would have been ungrateful to quarrel with what procured me such gracious attentions on the part of his sister.

We had not talked together ten minutes, before Princess Crescentia approached and interrupted us.

"Dear darling Anton!" said she, "you are come just in time to procure me the enjoyment of a little shooting. All summer, at Mehádia, papa promised me that, if we spent the *saison de chasse* at Lyarák, I should have a day sometimes with the pheasants; and Rodolph Zichy has brought me a present of the two most beautiful little pointers you ever saw; which look as if they had escaped from a mousetrap. — But when I wanted to go out and try them yesterday with the light gun you sent me over from England, mamma would not hear of it! — She says my brothers-in-law are too thoughtless to take care of me, — that our party, just now, is too large, — that they seldom go out without some accident."

"All which is perfectly true, my little Cressy! You have nothing left for it but patience."

"Surely you could manage to take me into the home-woods to-morrow, just for a shot or two, — just to try the dogs and gun, — before the rest of the party are on foot?" —

"Impossible, my dear child! — I am to introduce Rott'slie, to-morrow, to the gallant sport of boar-hunting."

Though a little shocked at the idea of a sporting young lady, — a Miss Nimrod, — a *Diane chasseresse* on a miniature scale, — no sooner did Crescentia turn her expressive eyes beseechingly towards me for assistance, than I endeavoured to further her views.

"If *I* am the only obstacle, my dear Anton," said I, — "if it be only to amuse *me* you have ordered out the hounds —"

"My dear fellow," he retorted, "if our diversions are to be secondary to the whims and fancies of a little puss like this, we *had better take* to the distaff at once! But make your mind easy.

The order of the day is decreed; and, having received my father's *imprimatur*, is as the law of the Medes and Persians. The trackers have got their instructions. Preparations have been made at the *rendez-vous de chasse*. Poor Cressy must settle her differences with the powers that be, as best she may."

And the following morning,—a fine October day, that lighted up the woods into burnished gold without destroying the bracing influence of the atmosphere, — when I found myself mounted on one of the finest horses of the far-famed Lyarák stables, accoutred from the Prince's armoury, and following a pack of boar-hounds which Theseus himself might have been proud to own, in company with my friend Anton Zriny and his brothers-in-law, Zichy and Keglovies, I could not help admitting, in the excitement of the moment, that women are sadly out of place where field-sports are going on; and that, except to weep over the catastrophe of an Adonis, even Venus herself is better at home.

I am not going to write up "Boar-hunting," as a rival to "Deer-stalking," or the "Rod and Gun." Having neither Snyders nor Landseer to illustrate my art of venery, I leave the field of sportsmanship to Mr. Poulett Scrope. Still, I should like my readers to enter a little into my emotions while enjoying in the most brilliant style one of the noblest, — nay, *the* noblest, because the most classical, — of the sports of the field; and understand my triumph when, the only person except Count Zichy in at the death of the tusky monster, the *couteau de chasse* was presented to me for the honour of giving the *coup de grâce*.

How scornfully on my return to England should I lift myself above the head of Charley Roxborough, by the right of recounting such exploits! How proudly should I relate in Yorkshire the mysteries of such a field, and describe the grim ferocity of the brindled *Wildschwein*. Nor did I fail to contrast the generous hospitality with which the honours of the chase were decreed to the stranger, — the best horse allotted to him, and the best position assigned,—with the different system I had seen practised by Roxborough at the Elms; where the keepers invariably reserved for their young master the best ground and best dogs, and then

shouted in honour of the weight of his game-bag, as though the consequence of his being a crack-shot.

Still more disagreeably was I forced to contrast his conduct with that of my foreign friends, when a week spent in their company enabled me to judge of their dealings at the card-table, at billiards, or wherever the chances of the moment were made the subject of a bet. There was something so high-toned, so chivalrous, so loyal in their avoidance of all advantage founded on my youth and rashness! I could get no one to take up the bets I offered; and I *now* perfectly understood the disgust with which Anton Zriny had contemplated in England the specious knaveries of the turf.

Animated by this cordial hospitality to a far higher standard of spirits than my wont, I was already beginning to find the day too short to enjoy the company and strive to recommend myself to the smiles of Princess Crescentia, and the night too short to dream of having obtained them, — a necessary preliminary towards the construction of new Castles in the Air. But there was *one* person who discerned far less charm than I did in the scenery and social system of Hungary. My courier, who acted also as my valet, — a treasure of a man, accustomed to the convenience of a London hotel, — took occasion to signify one morning, when I complained of the varnish of my boots, that if I intended to remain much longer at Lyarák, he would thank me to "give him his discharge."

On our first arrival, I had turned a deaf ear to his complaint of having to sleep with fifty other slaveys in a common dormitory, each prison-wise, with his mattress and rug; or rather, had silenced him by proving, on his own admission, that Prince Zriny's servants were accommodated in the same manner, — the mattress and rug being replaced by straw. But a fortnight spent in a duet of grumbling with Urbain, Anton's fribble of a French valet, in the land where, though serfhood is legally abolished, servitude is the bitterest of slavery, had chilled the very marrow in his bones. He had seen one of Prince Zriny's heyducks scourged for intoxication, stretched upon an iron table in the *court-yard of* the offices, under the authority of the Ekonom or

house-steward. He had seen the chasseur of Prince Ferdinand Chorinsky *minus* an ear,—sliced off by a sabre-cut from a former master, a Transylvanian magnat; and both he and Urbain were beginning to tremble in their skins at the notion of the horrors to which they might be exposed by some involuntary act of insubordination.

"They say, Sir, in the house," whispered he in a tremulous voice, "that the old Prince, for as venerable and benevolent as he looks, is worse than a Turk when his blood is up. The reason Prince Anton is so fond of roving about the world, — no matter whether England, France, or Spain, — is because the brutal ways of Hungary make his blood boil. Princess Crescentia's maid was saying to me (confidentially) t'other night, that notwithstanding the fondness of her parents, who encourage her, poor young lady, in all her kitten's tricks, if she was only to go contrary to their will in the merest trifle, — such as wanting to marry against their choice, or what not, — the old Prince would make no more of walling her up in one of the old turrets, than of hanging her terrier."

I saw the drift of his hint. During his service at table, he had doubtless noticed my attentions to the charming young Princess, and the graciousness with which they were accepted. And, having often occasion to bring me letters in the handwriting of one or other of my sisters, which to an unobservant eye would appear the same, I doubtless passed in his eyes for an engaged man, who was dishonestly fooling away his hours of absence with one he was not likely to make his wife.

I was beginning a stern homily on the unadvised presumption with which servants presume to decide upon the conduct and motives of their masters, when lo! a tap at my chamber door. — The Vienna post was arrived; and Urbain, despatched by his master, placed three letters in my hand, bearing the post-mark of the country I was using my best endeavours to forget!

CHAPTER XXIX.

Every man was free to follow
Bird or wild beast to his den;
Every man maintained his guard
With the sword and not the pen.
Manly thoughts and simple habits
Brought him health and banished pain;
There was freedom in the forest, —
There was plenty on the plain. BARRY CORNWALL.

THE forbearance of my good guardian was inexhaustible as the bounty of Heaven. My accident and illness at Baden, of which an exaggerated account had somehow or other reached his ears, seemed to have melted towards me the momentary hardening of his heart. His utmost displeasure was exhibited in a gentle remonstrance against my persevering confidence in so worthless a son, brother, and friend as Charles Roxborough. As to my remissness concerning the execution of his commission in Paris, I was sufficiently punished he said, in the loss of so many months of Mrs. Hawley's acquaintance. For already, though at the time of his writing but a week or two established at the Chase, she had fully justified the warmth of my praises. He spoke of her as she deserved, as grace and loveliness itself.

"I can now imagine," said he, "what it must have cost my poor Wrottesley to quit a world endeared to him by the affection of such an angel. But our regrets, alas! cannot recall him; and all that remains for me is to cheer the young existence he left so forlorn. In this task, my dear boy, I look to *you* for assistance. Since it appears that your pursuits on the continent are not of a much more prudent nature than those against which I had occasion to warn you in this country, the sooner you return to us the better. You ought to be on the spot, to superintend the preparations for your coming of age."

The second letter was from Gripham; — informing me, that if in want of money for my journey home, a second letter of credit similar to the last, was at my disposal; "for that Sir Robert Hawley appeared to have set his heart on my speedy return." And the tone of his letter was so deferential, and so different *from* his usual style of correspondence, that I began to suspect *he was in the* secret of Sir Robert's designs in my favour.

Though not on terms with me to justify a remark beyond the red ink line of pounds, shillings, and pence that bound us together, he could not forbear alluding to the sensation produced in the neighbourhood by Mrs. Hawley's arrival.

"The old gentleman," wrote Gripham, "has been quite another creature since she came; and between the cheerfulness she is creating at the Chase, and the spirited goings-on of the noble couple at Roxborough Elms, you will, I trust, Sir, find your life at Wrottesley Hall a very different thing from what it used to be. Already, people are beginning to talk of Mrs. Hawley's settling permanently in Yorkshire. Sir Robert is said to have determined, in case she should marry an Englishman, and to his liking, to make them heirs to his estate."

An Englishman, indeed! As if *the* Englishman were not already fixed upon.

My third letter, subscribed with a *paraphe* of C. E. R., graced with as many and as convulsive flourishes as an autograph of George Cruikshank (though connected with far less pleasureable associations,) contained a cool intimation on the part of Charley Roxborough, that, if he heard nothing from me to the contrary, he should take a few friends with him in December to Wrottesley Hall, to enjoy a fortnight's pheasant-shooting.

"It is an extreme inconvenience to me," wrote he, — as though the inconvenience were of *my* creating, "to be cut out of my winter shooting at the Elms. Those who are accustomed to look to me for their amusement at this season of the year, seem to think themselves aggrieved; and I trust, my dear Wrottesley, you will assist me in my dilemma. Do not distress yourself about our finding things out of order. I shall take down the old *sous-chef* from Watier's, who happens to be out of place; and with the aid of the keepers, your old hobble-de-gee of a Nicholls, and the freedom of the cellar, I dare say we shall get on pretty well."

No more allusion to the appeal contained in my last letter, or to Tom Whichcote, than if no such place as Rainham existed!—

He *did*, however, condescend to inform me that the "own brother to Marmaduke," had got a strain at the Houghton Meeting; but that, before the thing was blown, he had "managed to

get rid of him to Tom Mackey, Fortrose's brother, who had just taken to the turf, knowing scarcely so much as the difference between a horse and a mule; and who, like other green-horns, must pay for his schooling."

That night, as I sat carousing with Zriny and his friends, who were planning a wolf-hunting excursion to Szent Miklós, (an estate belonging to the Prince in Transylvania,) and discussing men, women, and things, with a degree of freedom, which can only exist among men of the same age and rank in life I could not refrain from a secret comparison, between the bluntness of my new friends, and the blandness of the hollow and circumspect Charley. Like him, the young fellows I was living with, loved horses and play, wine and women. But they prized their horses for their use and beauty, — not to drive a trade with them, — cards for the excitement of the moment, not from mere covetousness of gold, — wine, as a promoter of sociability, — and women, as an embellishment of life. The idea of eschewing wine for tea or coffee that they might be a better match at the card-table for their less sober friends, or of employing women as an influence to captivate those over whom it was eligible to obtain an ascendancy, was a baseness of which they were incapable. Not one of them but would have cut off his right hand, ere he stooped to Charles Roxborough's money-dealing equivocations; or connived in the subterfuges which tarnish many a well accredited transaction on the turf. Several were younger brothers, of families where the existence of a *majorat* renders younger brotherhood as starving a condition as in Great Britain. Several were wretchedly out at elbows. But sooner would they have run the gauntlet of Austrian discipline as common soldiers, than enrich themselves by the ignoble gains which have converted certain of our *cadets de famille* into men of fortune.

In all this, and the out-spoken cordiality of their nature, there was something inexpressibily attractive. I felt naturalized in their company, rather than a passing stranger admitted to a share of their bread and salt. In the hospitality of Lyarák was exhibited the feudal frankness which takes thought neither of *to-day nor to-morrow*: — the man of sufficient degree to break

bread with the Zrinys, being for the time as of their kith and kin.

It was partly the fascination of an order of things so new to me, — a life as of an Arab horde, — and partly, I am afraid, my fickleness of nature, which inspired the utmost repugnance towards the summons of Sir Robert. I, who, only two months before, had felt that the travelling carriage which bore the beautiful Albertine from the Rue de Rivoli, was bearing away the sunshine of my life, could think of her now only as an amiable young woman making tea for a formal old gentleman in an easy chair, with the urn smoking between them, and a coal fire smoking opposite; dull questions and dry answers being fired at intervals, like minute guns, to prove to each that, though nodding, neither was asleep. The idea of becoming a third partner in this drowsy firm was so little inviting, that the Albertine of Hawley Chase appeared a different being from the ingratiating hostess of *Les Epines;* and I turned from a Castle in the Air so cheerless as the faded, dreary, mildewed drawing-room of my good old guardian, to clap my hands for joy at the sight of the blazing hearth at Lyarák, and the sounds of song and mirth echoing in its lordly hall: —

> Laughing, quaffing, — blusterous weather,
> Winds and rain defied together, —
> Friendship glowing, — wine a flowing, —
> Wit beyond the proser's knowing, —

knit up into the charm of social fellowship.

For *there* jested my friend Anton, and *there* smiled the beautiful Crescentia; and when the old Prince called me to his side to talk about England and tell me how he had been at college at Brunswick with the royal uncles of my King; while the Princess inquired with jealous eagerness whether Princess Esterhazy, despite a grown-up daughter really passed for nearly the handsomest woman at the court of George IV., and on my answering in the affirmative, observed with a sigh that "there was nothing she so ardently desired as to visit England," I took their compliments to myself. — Were confirmation wanting to the proverb that a man is never a prophet in his own country, I should have found it in the *hauteur* manifested towards me by Lady Northam-

sted and her daughter, — of the Marquis of Clanalbin and Lord John Jocelyn, — compared with the overwhelming graciousness of the Zrinys.

Had I been as experienced as Charley Roxborough in the luxury of the best English country-houses, with Badminton, Belvoir and Bretby at my fingers' ends, I might perhaps have taken it into my head to be fastidious concerning the rough accommodations of the old hunting-seat. My courier never let a day pass without observing that a dozen well-trained servants would have done more honour to the Prince's establishment than the regiment of banditti by whom he was surrounded. But as it was literally the first housekeeping I had seen on a princely scale, instead of being disposed to find fault, I began already to dream of placing Wrottesley Hall on a similar footing. The butts of wine were to be ale, indeed; and the bucks roasted whole were to be Southdowns. — But I would have the same roughness and readiness; the same absence of mahogany and varnish, — of damask and satin.

After all, how out of place the city-luxury of our country-seats, in the midst of the woods and forests! What so adapted to the requirements of country life, as a spacious hall, for the alternate purposes of feasting, dancing, and music; — not too richly furnished under foot for the comings and goings of favourite dogs, from the huge mastiff or St. Bernard, down to the doleful-visaged spaniel, the tears of whose race are said to flow without ceasing for the fate of their royal patron King Charles; — or the Skye terrier such as Breughel has placed at the feet of Adam and Eve in Paradise in his famous picture of Amsterdam, — (Breughel de Vlour, dear public, from the place of his birth, not Breughel de Velours or "velvet Breughel," from the smoothness of his pencil, as you choose to blunder into supposing,) and such as Anton had placed on the lap of his sister; — nor too richly painted overhead, to be injured by the fumes of meerschaum or cigar.

Instead of the little fiddle-faddle *entrées* and *hors-d'œuvres* served by the *chef* at Glenhama, and savoured and applauded by *Charles* Roxborough and Fortrose as inquiringly as though they

were pastry-cook's apprentices or the salaried tasters of a royal household, I would have honest sirloins and lordly haunches, multiplied as the number of my guests might require; — coveys of partridges, flights of wild fowl, and shoals of fish. All should be on the scale of the famous recipe given to Lady Holland at Florence for making Parmesan cheese: "Take the milk of a hundred cows." My hospitality should throw into the shade even the old True Blue, open-house, system of Courtfield of Courtfield Manor. Even the hospitality of Lord Meadowley, renowned for doing the duty of a county member by a perpetual round of feasting worthy the patriarchs or King Priam, — should show by comparison like the dietary of an union workhouse.

But of this palace of plenty and simplicity, who was to be the queen? I might find substitutes for the barbecued deer and hogsheads of Ofener. But where was I to find a representative of Crescentia? What English young lady of high degree, educated by a model governess and got up by a pattern lady's maid, would be capable of doing the honours of my house to half a hundred guests, without fancying that she provided sufficiently for their entertainment by the lustre of her jewels and white satin, and the clatter of her Moscheles and Thalberg?

I was beginning seriously to commune within myself by what possible process of self-effacement I could sufficiently Hungarianize my nature to find favour in the eyes of the old Prince, in order to obtain the hand of a bride who would, I flattered myself, take the shine out of Lady John Jocelyn and Mrs. Hawley of Hawley Chase; when lo! the appointed day arrived for our start into Transylvania; and never was I more amused than by watching the unavowed struggle in the mind of the wretched Felix; between his dread of going to be hunted with dogs or have his ears sliced like lemons by some Hermannstadt Nero, (like the victims who had confided to him their wrongs,) if he accompanied me to Szent Miklós; and a vague apprehension that the Prince would order him to be scourged as unconcernedly as one of his own heyducks, during my absence, if he remained behind, should any thing like rebellion appear to afford a dangerous precedent for the Helots of Lyarák.

The first moment we were alone, he attempted to bluster out a declaration that "he had engaged himself at the desire of Sir Robert Hawley, Baronet, (who had promised in return to use his interest in procuring him a King's messenger's place) to accompany me on my travels through France and Germany — Hungary *not* included. No! there was never the smallest mention of Hungary; and sooner than undertake a journey among such a set of savages as the Slavacks, who went about like wild Ingins with hatchets stuck in their belts, and were such thieves that they 'd strip a carriage of its leathers and linings if left in an open coach-house, unless a watchman and lantern sat up with it all night, — sooner (he begged to say) than risk his precious life among such cut-throats —"

The orator paused; for Anton Zriny and Zichy at that moment entered my dressing-room to settle our hour for starting; and well knowing in what awe he stood of the Magyar magnats on ground where their nod was law and gospel, I insisted on his finishing his sentence. But Felix, in spite of his portly bearing and huge whiskers, was struck dumb by the force of his own imagination; and as he stood behind me, opposite the huge old Venice looking-glass, I saw that his face was white as ashes. It was only in pity to his beseeching looks I let him off the exposure of his pani:.

Not a little were his agonies increased, however, by learning at the final settlement of our *plan de campagne*, that he was to abide at Lyarák till our return.

Owing to the difficulty of finding horses after quitting Hermannstadt, — a day's journey from which, on the frontier of Moldavia and the Bannat, lay Szent Miklós, the estate where our feats were to be performed, — it was settled that only Zichy's valet and the head Jäger of Prince Zriny (who, as Hungarians born and speaking the language, could be of good service,) should attend us; packed into the rumble of the clumsy *kutsch* or berline which was to contain the humble servant of the reader, Anton Zriny, Zichy, and a certain Count Engelbert something or other, their intimate friend, who had arrived the preceding night.

Again did poor Felix cast towards me an imploring look. But

I took care to inform him so explicitly in presence of the major domo of Lyarák, that "he must abide my return in readiness to start with Prince Anton and myself for Paris," that, unless he had seen fit to make a moonlight flitting of it, and start across the fields to trudge back a hundred miles to Pesth bearing two heavy portmanteaus on his shoulders, it would have been as hard a matter to effect his escape, as from Spielberg or the Millbank Penitentiary. Accustomed to the insolence of Cambridge grooms and London valets, who, if worth having, contrive to render their services a torment as well as a favour, it was a treat to see my giant of six feet two brought so completely on his knees.

We were to start at daybreak: — a chill November morning; and yet I felt warm to the heart's core, — thanks not so much to the dolman and cap lined with sables with which I had provided myself at Pesth, as to my parting from the Zriny family the night before: when, taking the benefit of the customs of the country, I had not scrupled to press my lips to the withered hand of the Princess and the "bluest veins" of Crescentia, as I saw done by my fellow-travellers. Their good wishes for our journey and sport, in return, seemed to my jealous vanity more especially addressed to *me* than to the rest; and I had already made up my mind to take Anton into my confidence ere we returned to Lyarák, and ascertain whether the sale of my property in England, the renunciation of my faith and country, the addition of mustachios to my face and a "sky" or "y" to my name, would induce his noble parents to over-look my short-comings and the claims of the betrothed nephew.

Our journey was what men call delightful, so long as the glowing blood of youth is dancing in their veins. Furred to the chin like Laplanders, we smoked like Turks; and when the chill and clammy air admitted by the open windows hung in concentrated drops upon our whiskers, the travelling-cup of the silver cognac-flask was unscrewed, and passed round; and for the next hour, there ensued between our cigars an interlude of evil-speaking, lying, and slandering, during which such of the fairest and haughtiest dames of Paris, London, and Vienna, as chanced to remain unmentioned, might consider themselves in luck.

By degrees, the effects of ardent spirits, or the narrative genius of the scandal-mongers, became exhausted; and as their histories grew decent and prosy, the pleasure of dozing succeeded to that of boasting and belying; and when roused up by occasional collision with some huge fragment of rock left in the middle of the road, — such as, macadamized, would have mended the roads of the whole comitat, but over which our vehicle, after contending with it ferociously for a minute or two, effected a saltatory scramble — they betook themselves once more in succession to cigars, schnapps, scandal, and a snooze, to recommence with scandal, schnapps, and cigars.

The readiest at the latter pastime was my friend Anton; the readiest at the silver bottle, his brother-in-law; the most eager smoker of the party, because the least experienced, was myself. But in point of what in the *argol* of Paris is called *blague*, (and the French have an unquestionable right to invent a name for an art of their invention) was Count Engelbert; whose patronymic I then knew not, — and now that I know it, have especial reasons for keeping to myself.

Thanks to his inordinate bragging, which as compared with that of the most boastful idler of the Boulevart de Gand, was as a pair of seven league boots to an omnibus, I learned that he was the bosom friend of Reginald Stormont. Together, they had eaten fire, and ground the bones of tender females to make them bread, in three quarters of the globe, — Europe, Asia, and Africa. The roses of Damascus, the pomegranates of Granada, the acacias of Paris, had crowned their brows as with triumphal laurels. The balconies from which they had dropped, the silken ladders by which they had ascended, the injured husbands by whom they had been defied in single combat, the indignant fathers by whom they had been dogged with bravi and stiletti, — would have made the fortune of the most peppery *feuilleton* going, and filled the sixteen volumes of a catastrophic romance by Dumas, or a panoramic novel by Sue; and I sat staring at him in stupid wonderment, like some sun-scorched Arab on one of the professional tale-tellers of the East.

There was one story he related, of which Stormont and not

himself was the hero; which as it befel in Italy four years before, and an English family was mixed up with some of its most offensive details, I would have given worlds to have known how to pique him into elucidating by the names of the parties. For, sorely against my will, I could not help fancying that Albertine and her mother, and Wrottesley Hawley and his father, formed part of the *dramatis personæ*. Had some opportune mass of rock lain just then in our way, so as to jolt up my friend Anton out of his sleep, I could have easily insinuated into his mind misgivings concerning the fair niece of his friend the Comtesse de Valmoré, so as to prompt his eager nature into inquiries not to be evaded. But towards me, from the moment of our introduction, Count Engelbert had assumed an air of superiority and patronage so galling, that I would on no account place myself at the disadvantage of risking a question to which he could refuse a reply.

Provoking confirmation was yielded, moreover, to the justifiability of his self-assumptions, by the favour with which every female eye, wherever we halted for refreshment, rested on his audacious face and handsome proportions. When he threw off, with careless but masterly execution and a voice as ringing as Zucchelli's, a few bars of one of Rossini's *chefs-d'œuvre*, they crowded the corridor to listen; or if he wanted a light for his cigar, rushed about in search of it as though willing to burn the house down to afford him a match. I had consequently double reason for resenting the consequential air by which he tried to sink me into my boots, as a poor, harmless lad just escaped from college, who might perhaps be made something of when he had lived ten or a dozen years in the world, and learned the slang of the *bal de l'opéra*, and the art of whipping into *crême fouettée* the rich heaviness of *la crême de la crême*.

At Szent Miklós, where we were lodged, indifferently enough, in the house of the Prince's intendant, — the chief mansion of a hamlet where, with the exception of the priest and the Prince's forest-and-mine inspectors, not a soul could read or write, — I discovered that, in a positive as well as proverbial sense, "*toujours perdrix ne vaut rien.*" We had literally nothing to eat but game, washed down by the richest Hungarian wines; and as in-

cursion of our neighbours the Turks would scarcely have sufficed to rouse us from the heavy slumbers succeeding the savoury feasts and heady potations that crowned the hard day's chase.

But oh! the excitement of that chase; the grandeur of those virgin forests; and the feudal dignity of having villages and villages for trackers; — all glorying to render service and homage to the pride of the Magyars, — a son of the house of Zriny! The picturesque costume of the women, — the warlike aspect of the men, — the outlandishness (if so plebeian a word may stand its ground in a printed book) of the whole concern, made me look back on the tameness of my native sports with pity and contempt. While Zriny, Zichy, and Count Engelbert would probably have given all the wolf-hunting they were ever likely to enjoy, for a single week at Melton or with the Pytchley. I was infatuated by the daring exploits of a field whose triumphs depend far more on the daring of the man, than the fleetness or vigour of his horse. And then to compare a victory over poor pug with the glory of bringing home at your saddle-bow one of those grinning monsters whose ferocity is nowhere held in higher apprehension than by the proprietors of the enormous sheep-walks of the Hungarian *pusztas*.

The *Ekonomicus*, who was careful to keep up a pack of the finest wolf hounds extant on the Moldavian frontier, not so much for the sake of a sport which he regarded as waste of time as for the defence of the farms of Prince Zriny, was not a little overjoyed by the avidity of our search after what *he* regarded as beasts of prey for extermination. I even thought, at one time, he was going to offer us the price placed by the Comitat on the head of every wolf, — so much for males, — so much for females, — so much for cubs. But when, at the close of our third day's sport, Count Engelbert was so lucky as to be in at the death of a splendid bear which the dogs had incidentally started, the worthy man would fain have embraced the noble *chasseur* who had rid the neighbourhood of so mischievous a devastator.

"No, no, my good Sir!" cried the Count, in answer to his proposal for leave to forward the head to Bisztricz, the chief *town of the county*. "I mean to take back the skin in triumph to

Vienna. I shall have it arranged to make a *descente de lit* for the lady of my heart."

"For that, you need not go further than Lyarák," was Anton's careless rejoinder. "My father's huntsmen are the most capital fur-dressers I know."

A horrible suspicion that the bear-skin was intended as a trophy for the feet of Princess Crescentia, made me regret at that moment, that the conqueror of its rich raven-haired fur were not lying at the mercy of the hounds by whom it was run down.

I really believe it prospered the fellow for me to hate him as I did! Whatever might be the sport of the day, — small game or large, — ptarmigan, bustard, partridge, wild boar, deer, or wolf, — Count Engelbert had all the luck! I do not mean to deny that he was an expert sportsman. But chance must have had *some* hand in allotting him a share of the sport such as amazed even the jägers and iron-heeled peasants of the frontier.

There was something less than courteous in his manner of parading these triumphs over the head of a stripling like myself. Was it my fault that the higher civilization of England affords no experience in running down the bear or wolf? And if eight hours on foot among the thorny thickets of Szent Miklós, or ten hours in the saddle, proved sometimes too much for me, so that but for the *raki* liberally administered from the gourds of the jägers or foresters I should have found it a hard matter to reach home with the rest, — be it remembered that my early habits of life had been far less invigorating than those of a Hungarian magnat, who, according to the proverb of the country, is born on horseback.

And Count Engelbert was Magyar to the back-bone! — daring, reckless, rash, despotic, selfish, — yet contriving to tone down these defects under a brilliant varnish of valour and patriotism. In another century, he would have had sword incessantly in hand and spur on heel, for the defence of that native land of which he was proud to be the son; but whose sons, his brethren, he was apt to treat like niggers. Were I to recount the scenes of brutality I saw exercised in the course of that Transylvanian hunting party, and the tyrannies practised upon the vassals whom Anton would not permit me to call serfs, seeing

that serfhood has long been abolished in Hungary, I should describe a state of things such as may have existed in England in William Rufus's time, under sanction of the forest laws, and pass for an ungrateful monster throwing a brand of discord upon the hearth which accorded me hospitality. But this I *will* say; that if the adjacent provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia afforded proof of a more Turk-like tyranny, — I am a Dutchman!

I have bitterly repented since, by the way, that I did not succeed in persuading Prince Anton to accompany me in a few days' scamper across the border; for now that Turkey is unturbaned, and will probably soon become unveiled, it would be something to have obtained a glimpse at its saturnine solemnity ere it ceased to be a portion of the Oriental world. But Zriny and Count Engelbert entertained the true hot-blooded Hungarian scorn of their sherbet-drinking neighbours, and silenced my entreaties at once by the words plague and quarantine: — the diplomatic furlough of the former being so nearly expired, that I had not a moment to lose in feeling my way with him concerning proposals to the Prince and Princess, on our return to Lyarák, where we were to sojourn but a day.

Six weeks only were wanting to the attainment of my majority: a period to which I had looked forward, three years before, as to the coming together of heaven and earth. And now it was at hand, fain would I have postponed it; not alone to avoid the crash and clearance of outstanding claims, and the consequent sinking of my state; but because a winter spent at Vienna, (whither at the commencement of January the Zriny family were accustomed to repair from their fine but grim old palace in the fortress of Buda, for the galas of the new year,) appeared the *summum bonum* of human happiness.

The day preceding that which was fixed for our departure from Szent Miklós, I endeavoured to communicate all this to my friend Anton, as we were jogging back from the forest together in a dim twilight and mistling rain. But either from the superabundance of *raki* with which my nervousness and the *Jagd-Meister* had thought proper to prepare me, my speech was nearly *as thick as the soil through* which we were wading.

I dare say poor Anton thought the moment a strange one for my burst of enthusiasm in favour of Hungary; which I suddenly pronounced to be the richest, noblest, and most favoured of the kingdoms of the earth.

"Which does not prevent me from wishing," he good-humouredly retorted, "that at this present speaking, the favoured kingdom afforded us *terra firma* free from mud, and an atmosphere free from drizzle. However, I rise in my stirrups to return thanks in the name of Hungaria: and propose, in return, the honourable gentleman's health."

"I am sorry," said I, "you see only matter for a jest in my honest enthusiasm; for I can assure you that the high-minded nobleness of the prince your father, and the frank, high-bred, and chivalrous sentiments of those of his countrymen with whom as his guest I have become acquainted, have produced so strong an impression on my heart, that nothing would make me happier than to settle among them for life."

"My dear fellow, — my dear Rott'slie," said Anton, in undisguised amazement, "are you making a fool of *me*, or of yourself? What on earth would you do in this country — misgoverned and distracted to a point that renders even the most patriotic of her sons absentees? You, with your fine estates and a seat awaiting you in parliament, where you may go to sleep over the interests of the nation with the perfect certainty that such a powerful impetus has been imparted to its good government that it will proceed safely and prosperously in its sphere of routine for the next fifty years, without occasion for legislative interference, — you, to hanker after this land of broils and tribulations, where as in your own Ireland, all is heart-burning and strife! You must be fond indeed of fishing in troubled waters!" —

I endeavoured to clear my voice and his understanding, to make him comprehend that my naturalization in Hungary, was to be a means and not an end; — which however I did not accomplish till we neared the lights of Szent Miklós; where, the days being so short, Prince Zriny's people were careful to plant at nightfall blazing pine-torches in the parapet of the terrace sur-

rounding the house of the intendant, as a land-mark to the loiterers of the hunt. But when at last, by stammering out the name of Princess Cresçentia, I afforded him a clue to the mystery, he pulled up his horse with such vehemence, as to splash me with mud up to my very gorget of deer-skin.

"What the deuce can you mean by such fooling!" said he. "Did ever man but yourself, my dear Rott'slie, dream of digging a well that he might stumble into it headlong?" —

I muttered something about the impossibility of defying our destinies.

"Nonsense, *destinies!*" cried Zriny, pricking on as abruptly as he had reined up. "A man's *will* is his destiny! From the moment he comes to man's estate, his fate is the work of his hand. I went out of my way to apprize you of my sister's engagement; and if you found her attractions too much for you, you should have taken yourself out of hers!"

"As your travelling companion and guest," argued I, a little nettled, "how was I to propose so ungracious a thing as to tear you from Lyarák? At all events, no one but myself is the sufferer from my infatuation!"

"How do you know that?" cried Anton. And for a moment, I flattered myself he was aware that his sister's heart experienced *some* leaning towards me. "How the deuce do you know *that?*" he repeated, almost angrily. "If this foolish fancy of yours were to transpire, what might Engelbert think of it all?" —

"Count Engelbert?" I reiterated, aghast.

"Would he not have some reason to apprehend that my sister had been coquetting with you during his absence? Has he not a right to argue that no man in his senses takes so strong a step as you have taken, unless stimulated by great encouragement on the part of the lady? Consider what a life Crescentia might be made to lead, if he intimated his suspicions to her parents; above all, to my mother, of whom he is the favourite nephew!" —

"Do you mean to say," said I, the blood running as cold in my veins as the rain-drops were trickling down my back, "that Count Engelbert is the affianced husband of Princess Crescentia?"

"*Do you* pretend that you were ignorant of it?" repeated he.

"Surely the mode in which you saw them take leave of each other might have convinced you that they were betrothed lovers!"

Something between a sigh and a groan was my response; lost probably in the splashing of our horses' feet through the road, which resembled the channel of a brook.

"Though Engelbert is a rattling, noisy fellow," added my friend, as we approached the gate of Szent Miklós, "my sister is warmly attached to him. Brought up together and affianced from childhood, their love has grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. They are to be married early in the spring; and last night, I was literally thinking of proposing to you, when you expressed such strong predilections in favour of Hungary, to return with me and be present at their wedding!"

Lucky that, at that moment, there was some one to assist me in dismounting in the little court-yard of the intendancy; for between *raki* and disappointment, my legs seemed to give way under me. I had just presence of wind, as I sculked off to bed on pretence of an overwhelming *migraine*, to entreat that my friend Anton would keep the secret of my rash attachment, both from its fair object and Count Engelbert.

But alas! from the uproarious merriment that reached my restless pillow from the hall where the hunters, including one or two Hungarian gentlemen who had joined us from Bisztricz, were carousing below, mingled with hunting-songs, hurrahs, and breaking of glasses, I could not help fearing that Anton might have behaved as Charles Roxborough would certainly have done in his place; and amused the company by the diagnosis of my sudden illness, as caused by an indigestion of unsuccessful love.

How thoroughly disenchanted were my views of Hungary on our way back to Lyarák! A severe frost having set in upon the chilly rain of the preceding night, the road was as slippery as glass; — and though twice the quantity of cigars and Cognac were consumed to lighten our *ennui*, not one of us but cursed in our hearts the inconvenience arising from imperfect civilization — bad roads — bad inns — and no posting. Count Engelbert had all the singing and bragging to his own share; and now that I knew to what excitement to attribute the towering nature of his

spirits, I could have killed him for the smile which rendered the double row of his handsome teeth a permanent exhibition.

He had no need for reward for consolation! *He* had no inducement to construct Castles in the Air! A paradise preordained for him stood invitingly open; with an angel keeping watch over the gate! —

CHAPTER XXX.

I will be proud, — I will read politic authors, — I will wash off gross acquaintance, — I will be point-device, the very man!—I do not now fool myself to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me,—Jove and my stars be praised! — SHAKSPEARE.

Il cherchait de grand soucy en quelle manière commencer à parler; car il ne savait s'il était en l'air ou en la terre; et ainsi fait l'amour à ses subjects. — LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE BLEUE.

IT is the enviable privilege of Castle Builders that, instead of wasting time in deploring the fall of their airy erections, they are as ready to recommence the unprofitable toil as a child its house of cards, or a swallow its nest of clay.

Never did the unstable nature of my aspirings, prove of higher account to me, than when, after an uneasy day spent at Lyarák — where I found letters from home entitling me to excuse myself to Prince Anton, I commenced my journey; — alone, for I had no longer leisure for the pleasant lounge to Paris we had anticipated. To save time, I was forced to hurry back by Ratisbon and Brussels. The marriage of one of my sisters, of which previous letters of intimation had miscarried, demanded my immediate presence.

A suppressed smile in the blue depths of the expressive eyes of Princess Crescentia, betrayed a more intimate acquaintance with my motives and repinings, than was pleasant to my pride. But I took my last leave of her like a Spartan — though Count Engelbert was showing his white teeth, triumphantly over her shoulder; and I defy the quickest witted individual present, — whether the Princess's pet confessor or the Prince's body physician, — to say that I showed more emotion in impressing my farewell kiss upon the hand of the young Princess, than of the old.

The moment I found myself alone in my glory in my britzka, with the long wasted shadow of the careworn Felix reclining in the rumble, with the aspect of a prisoner released after twenty years' durance by the fall of the Bastille. I began, as I said before, to create a new Walhalla for myself among the wintry clouds; an occupation which, more than fur *caput* or *chancelière*, enabled me to defy the inclemency of the wintry weather.

"Thank Heaven," said I, (while four powerful post-horses dashed me along at a rate which made me sensible alike to the merits of the Prince of Tour and Taxis, the postmaster-general, and the savageness of the trackless Hungarian wilds,) "thank Heaven, my weakness is known only to my friend Anton, who has not a single English connection. No fear that the brief madness of my passion for the bright particular star of Lyarák, should transpire! All that need be known in England of my Hungarian campaign is the number of wolves and boars I saw slaughtered, — the number of peasants who slaved at our battues, — the number of hogsheads of wine broached during the hunting season, — and the number of Wallachians who, on finding Szent Miklós honoured by princely occupation, hurried across the border with horses, perfumes, gems, sabres, pipes, and brocades, to tempt us into traffic: sufficient, God wot, to make Hawley Chase, Roxborough Elms, and the Archdeacon prick up their ears. The noble mastiff crouching beside Felix in the rumble, — my *caput* of sables, — my Turkish pipes, — and above all the case of opals in my dressing-case, will attest the truth of my travels; and convince such spooneys as Charley Roxborough that I come from a land where his full-dress notions of Pytchely horsemanship would pass for the milk-and-water prowess of a boarding school."

I accordingly set about cultivating a pair of mustachios, already of redundant growth; and rejoiced that the weather-staining of the sporting season had bronzed away the delicacy of complexion created by my Baden disaster.

"Let Albertine look to herself;" cried I, "for I am no longer the effeminate boy who had scarcely courage to enter her opera-box! If Count Engelbert's vauntings disgusted me, at

least, they opened the eyes of the blind. I am beginning to understand now that faint heart and faint hand never won fair lady: — and the lady I am resolved to win, shall admit that *every pigeon voyageur* does not return with drooping head and trailing wing to its expectant nest."

I gloried in my own uncouthness, — I delighted in smelling of smoke like a *tabagie*. The foreign cut of my garments appeared to *me* the title-page of a romance. In all the modern ones I could bring to mind, either printed or acted, a travelled man of my complexion was the Lovelace of the plot. The last letters of Sir Robert Hawley intimated more plainly than even his preceding ones, a desire that Wrottesley Wrottesley should succeed to the privileges and possessions of Wrottesley Hawley; and with such a property and such a wife in prospect, I had only to bless my stars for having been defeated in materializing a Castle in the Air, by the mere planning of which I had richly incurred a verdict of "Temporary insanity."

With respect to Emily's marriage, announced by my mother in four Bath post sheets full of elegiacs, I was too thankful for the pretext it had afforded for my hurried journey to philosophise as I ought to have done on finding the mighty fallen. Unable to defer my Yorkshire journey by a previous visit to Hentsfield, I contented myself with reminding Mrs. Powerscourt that, at five-and-twenty, her daughter was fully competent to choose for herself; while to Emily's appeal to my brotherly feelings, I answered that since by her own account she had cherished for the last five years an attachment for the curate of Berkhampstead the Reverend Howard Smith, (amazing by the way the passion of Browns, Greens, and Smiths for attaching an aristocratic prefix to surnames that render them all but anonymous!) I should be most happy to give her away at the wedding and add five thousand pounds to her fortune. "But that as to the living of Rainham" — (which I suspected to afford some inducement to the Reverend Howard in seeking her hand,) — "it was already disposed of to a young clergyman, enjoying an excellent constitution."

I begged her to communicate this piece of information with *my compliments* to the worthy curate, whose demureness in

former tea-drinkings at Hentsfield, had always moved my detestation; and afford me and my men of business due notice of the signing of the settlements and the happy day.

Having eased my conscience by this shallow tribute to the claims of my kindred, away I went into Yorkshire; almost as much elated as when, some three years before, I followed the same direction. Had the holly and misletoe which decorated the turnpikes and park lodges along the road, been expressly placed there in honour of the majority which, three weeks later, I was to accomplish, I could not have felt more convinced that the intervening shires between Long's Hotel and Wrottesley Hall, were preparing to celebrate my coming of age.

So earnest were the invitations addressed to me by Sir Robert Hawley's last two or three letters, that I made up my mind to proceed straight to the Chase, with the blushing honours of my travels thick upon me, — my tall courier, my Hungarian mastiff, my case of opals, my furred coats, my sweeping mustachios, and a mingled perfume of tobacco and essence of roses, conveying forcible reminiscences of the Turkish frontier. Better go just as I was. — All that was eccentric in my appearance or belongings would serve to vivify the stagnant atmosphere of the old house. Even Albertine, with the mercurial flutterings of a Frenchwoman, would not fail to be captivated by quaintnesses which spoke eloquently of a foreign land, *then* as much *terra incognita* as now that cannibal country, where, according to Sydney Smith, cold clergyman is served on the sideboard.

As we passed the lodge of the Chase, which, by calculation, I reached before dusk, a double allowance of evergreens in the windows announced a still greater sympathy in the forthcoming events. But I also noticed that the lodge had been whitened; and that, instead of the solitary apple-tree and thorn-hedge which used to complete the messuage, a neat little garden had been laid out. The ornamental plants were killed down by the frost; but the winter vegetables were flourishing. This might account, perhaps, for the cheerful smile of my old friend Mary Gale, as she opened the gate, and bobbed innumerable curtsies to welcome my return.

In spite of myself, I felt more nervous as we drove up to the door, than on the day I approached it first, on foot, after escaping from Gripham and the coffin of my late revered relative. I was both conscience-sick and uneasy. — If the favourable sentiments entertained towards me in Paris by Mrs. Hawley should have undergone a fatal change, from all she had heard of me in my own neighbourhood! — If I should no longer find in Sir Robert's heiress the good and gracious Albertine of Les Epines, — that gentle being, who at parting had hazarded such unmistakeable demonstrations in my favour! —

But no! She received me charmingly, — almost affectionately: as one who has been long expected, yet whose coming is a pleasing surprise at last. It seemed odd to hear her propose going to apprise Sir Robert of my arrival, lest he should be startled and affected; she, who ought in that house to be a still greater stranger than myself! But she proposed it so kindly, that I was content to be preceded into his presence by such a harbinger; particularly as there ensued no delay in begging me instantly to "step up." Sir Robert would see me in his dressing-room.

It was the self-same apartment I used to think so dreary, and the self-same old man I used to think so desolate. I had pitied them both, — I had shunned them both, — as so faded and cheerless, that it made one fancy one's hair turning grey to spend a sunless hour under their influence. But no! they could *not* be the same! — The blazing fire in the bright steel grate, — the newly-papered walls, with a pattern of vine-wreaths on a highly-glazed white ground, — the rich furniture of rosewood and dark green velvet, with curtains to match, — the full piled Axminster carpet — the handsome bronzes on the broad white marble chimney-piece, — had created one of the pleasantest dressing-rooms I ever entered; while the old gentleman, seated in an easy chair of green morocco, with smiles upon his cheeks and tears in his eyes, was quite as much a new creation as the room. None but a woman's hand could have effected such a transformation!

"At last, my dear Wrottesley, *at last!*" faltered Sir Robert, looking me earnestly in the face. "We have been expecting you *till I had almost* ceased to expect. But Albertine, who seems to

understand your movements better than I, always assured me you would be here before the twentieth. It would have been a sad mortification to me, Harry, had you absented yourself from the celebration of your coming of age!"

I assured him, of course, that such an act of disregard was impossible; and, after answering a variety of questions concerning my journey and the number of days it had taken me to reach London from Vienna, began to look so restlessly at the door in hopes that Mrs. Hawley would make her appearance, that he seemed to think it necessary to account for her.

"We dine at five," said he, "because that foolish old fellow Gurgle has made my grand-daughter believe that the hours kept by other people are bad for me; and as the half-hour bell rang just before you arrived, she is probably gone to dress."

"In that case," said I, "that I may not keep you waiting, my dear Sir, allow me to ask for my dressing-room."

"Why, I cannot say but you would be the better for a little trimming and shaping," observed my guardian, contemplating with an air of fatherly commiseration my shaggy head and hirsute visage. "A hunting party in the heart of a forest is not exactly the thing, Harry, to bring you into training for a lady's presence. — But till to-morrow, my dear boy, we will dispense with your looking *quite* like other people!"

And while waiting for a servant to show me to my chamber, he added — "They will give you, I dare say, the old blue room. But it is not called the blue room *now*. Every thing is altered at the Chase. That dear girl has restored the dead to life. That dear girl has put young blood into my veins. My grand-daughter is the good genius of the place. It has been a great amusement to her to furnish and brighten up the house; and I feel twenty years further from the grave since she redeemed the ruinous aspect of every thing around me. — By the way, Harry," continued he, calling me back as I was quitting the room, "have you brought her news from her family? Did you see Monsieur Des Auliers as you passed through Paris?"

I explained to him that I had taken the upper or courier's road home from Vienna, and had not been near Paris.

"I am sorry for that," he replied, "for she will be sadly disappointed. And so am I; for I wanted to know from a credible witness how her uncle bears her absence; and whether he would be likely to resent her remaining settled in England by a second marriage."

It was not for *me* to deliver my opinion on a point which, I flattered myself so nearly concerned me; and in order to relieve my embarrassment, I began to inquire after the Roxboroughs.

The old gentleman's countenance fell.

"I have much to tell you about them," said he; "but nothing that you will hear with pleasure. By your leave therefore, Harry, we will defer all mention of the family till to-morrow; that no unpleasant feeling may mar the comfort of your welcome home."

Always willing to second the postponement of disagreeable discussions, I escaped from the room in order to make the best of myself by the most impressive toilet which the latest fashions of the Wollgraben enabled me to exhibit.

I will not deny, moreover, that I also made the best of myself during dinner-time, while recounting our hunting adventures by flood and fell; the cliffs we had ascended and the rivers we had forded, at Szent Miklós, in pursuit of sport; and the severities by which the game-laws were maintained against the spirit-broken vassals of Prince Zriny. In describing an encounter of which I had been one day a witness, between his jägers and some Moldavian vagrants, any one might have supposed that I had "taken the uncircumcised dogs by the beard and smote them" till they yelled for mercy. For Felix, overcome by the fatigues of his journey, had dispensed with waiting upon me as usual at table; and I profited by the opportunity of having no importunate witness present, like Banquo's ghost at the feast of Macbeth, to look me down while I was bragging.

I had certainly every encouragement to proceed. Such was Sir Robert's almost paternal partiality, that if I had chosen to repeat the numeration table, he would have listened with interest; and as to Mrs. Hawley, Desdemona herself could not have been a more attentive auditress. They contrived to make me relate to *them of Hungary* and the Hungarians twice as much as I knew;

and Albertine appeared fully to share my enthusiasm concerning the equestrian nation which ploughs its fields and works its wine-presses in spurs; as proud of the legendary consequence of its ancient kingdom, as the most barefaced, barefooted, and bare-backed cadger in Connaught.

Sir Robert, indeed, kept harking back to my accident at Baden; and was evidently of opinion that evil effects must yet remain. But the manner in which Albertine managed to silence him, — as if conscious that the subject must be a sore one, — excited suspicions in my mind, long afterwards confirmed, that the most unflattering accounts had reached them of the catastrophe. I had, in fact, been represented as having been nearly killed by perpetrating buffooneries, while in a state of intoxication, for the entertainment of a fashionable party! —

After dinner, when we repaired from the old eating-room whose solemnities still remained untouched, to the elegant little drawing-room especially devoted to Mrs. Hawley's use, which bore in every object it contained the impress of a Parisian's graceful fancy, I could not but compliment her — (seeing that neither coffee nor tea sufficed to animate my poor old guardian out of his habitual doze, which he did not enjoy the less for the comfortable *fauteuil* in which he was ensconced) — on the miracles she had wrought at Hawley Chase.

"I will not certify," she replied, with a smile such as might have melted an iceberg, "that I did not, on my arrival, overturn every thing and disparage every body I met with, in the hope of making my company unacceptable, and getting sent back in disgrace to the Rue des Tournelles. But the kindness with which Sir Robert submitted to my whims and fancies, disarmed my perversity; and all my latter attempts have been suggested by a most disinterested desire to render his house more comfortable and his life more easy."

There was every reason to congratulate her on the result. I could not recognise in the cheerful, airy, well-attended country-house in which I found myself, the mildewed retreat of hypochondriacism in which I had never been able to pass four-and-twenty hours without contracting the blue-devils; nor could I

refrain from expressing a wish, accompanied by a sigh not quite loud enough to disturb the slumbers of my old guardian, that some benignant fairy would be at the trouble of working at Wrottesley Hall a hundredth part of the wonders she had effected at the Chase.

It would have been too much like a pretence to carry matters by a *coup de main*, had I proceeded at once to say more. A few days' enactment of the farce of disinterested friendship were necessary as a preliminary to those demonstrations which, whether late or early, must be crowned with success.

Next day, my surprise was a thousand fold increased. — Charley Roxborough himself could not have got up the stable department to a higher pitch of perfection, than the woman whose notions of horses and equipage I imagined to be limited to the long-tailed Normandy geldings of Monsieur Des Auliers, and her own modest calash and pair of bays; — nor, on repairing to the breakfast-table, could I retain an exclamation of joy at seeing the tea-and-toast propensities of the old Baronet laid aside for a breakfast which, without discrediting the stubstantialities of Yorkshire fare, conveyed pleasant reminiscences of Tortoni's. Even the old serving-men, though unchanged, — for she would have considered it as sacrilegious to remove the faithful old adherents from their posts, as to tear down the family pictures from the walls or the ivy from the clock turret) — were so revived by the presence of youth and beauty, that their faculties seemed brightened. They were not half so blind, deaf, lame, or stupid, as they used to be.

The only fault I had to find with the breakfast-table was, that no one condescended to share it with me. Both Mrs. Hawley and Sir Robert breakfasted in their own rooms, and did not come down till luncheon time; and I consequently resolved to ride over to Wrottesley in the interim. For I was eager to be at home, — eager for a glimpse of Old Nicholls's withered, but loving face; and above all, eager to unravel a thousand mysteries concerning which, I would not for worlds, have questioned my good guardian. The name of Rainham or of the Roxboroughs, could not *decently be* pronounced at Hawley Chase.

I experienced, I confess, some emotion on approaching the confines of my domain. So severe a frost had set in, that there was no one at work in the fields by whom I could be recognized. But on reaching the western lodge, there was something that went to the bottom of my heart, in the sudden flush of joy that reddened the face of the lodge-keeper's wife, on hailing that of her young master.

As yet, my arrival had not transpired. These people still thought of me as a pilgrim in lands beyond the sea; nor had I the least reason for feeling vexed when I perceived every shutter of the old house hermetically sealed, so that, from its frozen lawn, it looked grievously like a bankrupt manufactory. But my own face reddened like that of the lodge-keeper's wife, under the apprehension that it must have appeared in the same light to the eyes of the comfort-loving Albertine.

No matter! There was plenty of time before us both for Mrs. Wrottesley to reform its defects; and an immediate solace awaited me in the joy with which poor old Nicholls was sure to welcome my return. I had brought him an embroidered Hungarian tobacco-pouch, as a token of remembrance when far away; an honour which, combined with the glad tidings I had to communicate, that one of his beloved young ladies was on the eve of a happy marriage, would, I doubted not, bring tears to his eyes.

"Where is Nicholls? Send Nicholls here," cried I to the grinning bumpkin by whom the back door to which I unceremoniously repaired, was opened at my summons. And when he scuffled off, and was lost to view at the end of the offices, I nothing doubted that the old man was enjoying his pipe and cup of October in the steward's room—his custom ever of an afternoon.

But when, after five minutes' delay, neither he nor the bumpkin made his appearance, I hurried in through the dark damp passages, which, in an empty house, are apt to remind one of the mouldiness of a family vault.

The first person I met was a respectable-looking woman, who appeared to have been added to the establishment since I quitted it; to whom I hastily renewed my previous orders that Nicholls might be sent for.

"Am I addressing the Squire?" was her cool reply. "Are you really Mister Wrottesly?"

"Really Mr. Wrottesley. Let me speak immediately to Nicholls!"

"Why deary me, Sir, you don't seem to have heard!" exclaimed the new house-keeper. "Yet Mr. Grip'em told us he 'd wrote to you every day from the very first."

"From the very first of *what?*"

"Of the typhus breaking out in the house, Sir."

"The typhus!" cried I, hastily retreating along the passage, as if death and destruction were staring me in the face.

"Oh! there ben't no fear *now*, Sir," resumed my informant following me resolutely to the door, as if determined that I should share the danger residing in the hem of her garment. "It 's four months since the fever broke out in the house. Bob the letter-boy, was the last as fell ill; and he 's been about again these ten days. Poor Mr. Nicholls, Sir, was the *first*. — *He* was buried a week afore Candlemas."

Buried! — Poor Nicholls, my earliest adherent — my father's faithful old servant — laid in the earth! Had not the buxom house-keeper been staring me in the face, fain would I have sat me down on the wooden bench beside the door, and wept! — At all events, she noticed enough of my emotion to spare me further details; except that "the old gentleman went off like the snuff of a candle," dying as quietly as he had lived. The only complaint he had been heard to utter, was at the commencement of his seizure, before stupor intervened, — that "it was a hard thing he should not live to see his young master's face again: — that there was a many things on his mind he should like to have told to Master Harry."

To this stranger, I cared as little to put further questions, as to let her see how deeply I was affected. All I asked was about Gripham. "When had he been there? — When was he expected again?" —

"He had been there two days before; and may be mightn't come again for a day or two. There was no saying. His wisits *was never to be* reckoned upon."

Just as an agent's visits ought to be. The man seemed to be doing his duty. I determined, therefore, to write and to announce my return, and appoint a meeting with him at the Hall. But till then, I had no wish to re-enter its doors. The word typhus appalled me; my last experience under my own roof had been an illness of six weeks' duration; and I had no ambition to reinaugurate myself by another. My winter attack and accident at Baden had placed me long enough on the sick-list the preceding year, without throwing myself once more into the hands of the doctors.

Remounting my horse, therefore, I signified to the men who came crowding about me from the offices tugging their forelocks in my honour, and vociferously wishing me a happy new year and all the rest of it, that I was staying at the Chase, and should ride over again in a day or two. I passed leisurely through the village; though, for anything I knew, the typhus might have communicated itself thither from the Hall; and on seeing as I went by the church-door open as if for repairs, tied my horse to the gate of the churchyard and hurried in; — hoping to learn from the venerable clerk in what part of it poor Nicholls was laid, and who had accompanied him to the grave.

The clerk was indeed in attendance. I descried him standing with a red comforter over his nose in the chancel; superintending some workmen who were putting up what seemed to be a monumental tablet, or perhaps a new table of the commandments, near the communion table. Finding him too much absorbed in what was going on to notice me, I advanced towards him so as, before I addressed him, to obtain a view of the work he was inspecting; when lo! a single glance at a marble tablet adorned with the inverted torches significant of death, served to plunge me into a stupefaction still greater than his own.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
CAROLINE ROXBOROUGH,
Died Nov. 3rd, 1822.
Aged 21 Years.
"Blessed are the pure in spirit, for they shall see God."

Sacred to her MEMORY! — Nothing then remained on earth of that lovely and most woman-hearted being, who for a time had swayed all the pulses of my heart, and whom I had been a main instrument of dooming to an early grave!

On seeing me lean against the high oaken wainscot of an opposite pew contemplating the inscription, the clerk advancing hat in hand, in the idea that I was playing the critic on the place assigned it, begged to inquire whether "I thought the monument oughtn't to be placed a trifle nigher the window?"

"If your honour pleases," said he, "I 'll step to the parsonage and tell Dr. Temple you 're here; and then, you might give him your own notions about the tom'stone."

This of course I peremptorily declined. But I could not refrain from inquiring where the remains of poor Caroline were laid.

"Just under your honour's fut; — just opposite the rectory pew, so that no once can enter it without treading over her grave."

"By Dr. Temple's wish?"

"By the poor young lady's wish, Sir, on her death-bed."

"She died then at the Parsonage?"—

"No, Sir! At an inn, on her way hither from the north; with Miss Adela as was, now a lord's lady, attending on her. But the Elms being let to strangers, she did not wish, like, to be carried to a place which could scarce be called a home. And so she begged to be laid beside our good rector's late lady, who 'd been all as one as a mother to her when she was a child. Poor young lady, — poor young lady! There was a many sore hearts in the church, Sir, the day Miss Caroline was lowered into the ground. Working folks belonging to the Elms, came from far and near, Sir, when they heard one of Sir Gratian's young ladies was to be buried; and when they found 't was Miss Car, Sir, I warrant they 'd as soon it had been a child or sister of their own. For, as all the people said, — she was an angel born. Not a creature ever had a harsh word or harsh look from Miss Caroline, — though many a sorrowful one — for her heart was too heavy for her years. While the Doctor was reading the burial service over her, there warn't a dry eye in the church."

I wanted breath and self-possession to silence him; and could I have driven him and the masons from the spot, would fain have flung myself down on the cold stone that covered the remains of Caroline, and besought her pardon for the injuries I had done her, and her intercession with that mighty Avenger with whom she was at that moment in bliss.

But false pride made me close up my eyelids to conceal my tears; and when I desired the loquacious clerk to point out to me in the churchyard the grave of my faithful old servant as the object of my errand in Wrottesley Church, the man was so terrified by the hoarse sternness of my voice in the dread of having unintentionally offended me, that he kept mingling with the information he afforded, uncouth supplications for forgiveness.

"Mr. Nicholls was laid just there, — under the shade of the north transept: just agin Peggy Watts's little boy, which died last Michaelmas of the measles. He hoped no offence to my honour for his making so free. Mr. Gripham talked of a headston'. But if he 'd known my honour was not on friendly terms with the Roxborough family, he 'd ha' cut his tongue out afore he 'd dropped a word about the poor young lady. And Mr. Gripham wasn't certain, for the matter of the register or the coffin-plate, whether poor old Master Nicholls war' seventy-five or seventy-six. But may be my honour would cause it to be rectified when it came to the tom'ston'." —

CHAPTER XXXI.

C'est une des lois fatales de l'humanité que rien n'y atteigne le but; tout y reste incomplet: — les hommes, les choses, la gloire, la fortune, et la vie. GEOFFROY.

I DO not ask even the gentlest of my readers to pity me. One and all, dear public, you have probably long since decided me to be a vain, shallow, worthless fellow; the history of whose fortunes you follow to the close, only in hopes of finding him brought to pains and penalties at last.

But this I promise you, — that I was abundantly deserving of pity. To be condemned to go through my Sabbath devotions for the remainder of my life within view of that terrible re-

membrancer of my heartlessness, — the early grave of the good and gentle Car, — and within reach of the searching and Nathan-like admonitions of the offended Dr. Temple, whose every look would convey, — "Thou art the man by whom she was wrested from our love," — was a sad drawback on the joys of home. Now that I had got for nearest neighbour one who, throughout my college days, had treated me with such insulting disdain as Lord John Jocelyn, there was some excuse for the fervour of my wish that Wrottesley Hall and Hawley Chase stood in some less desirable spot than the West Riding.

For I had not been half an hour in my good guardian's society, before I found that Lord John had already been voted infallible by a grand conclave of country gentlemen, as Pope of the district. Lord John was reforming parish abuses, — Lord John was pulling up turnpike trusts, — Lord John was pulling down notices to trespassers, — Lord John was giving shelter to vagrants and work to trampers, — Lord John had thrown open the preserves of the Elms, — Lord John had thrown down the barriers of his park. Had he been inclined to start against Courtfield of Courtfield Manor as representative of the county, the chances were that he might carry the day.

All this was vexatious enough; for he had assumed the very ground on which it had been my intention to take my stand; and it was as though some actor, to whom a *debut* has long been promised in the part of Hamlet, were to see the rival to whom he had secretly assigned the part of Laertes, arranged in the suit of sables and black bugles his heart delights in, and welcomed by the public with unbounded applause.

I could have borne the infatuation of the country gentlemen, or the obsequiousness of churchwardens and select vestries; for in the eyes of such toadies in grain, the virtues of a Duke's son are at all times worthy of canonization. But I could not forgive Sir Robert, — I could not forgive Mrs. Hawley. *They* need not have had the Jocelyns perpetually on the tip of their tongue. They need not have judged it necessary to model their household after *the fashion of the* Elms. They were the very people to have maintained an honourable independence.

I did not, alas! give them credit for such delicacy of feeling as prompted them, throughout luncheon time, to dwell upon the admirable household arrangements of Lord and Lady John, while Sir Robert declared that the change of society at the Elms increased the value of property in the neighbourhood, only with the charitable view of directing my mind from such miserable self-accusations as must naturally have arisen from a first visit to Wrottesley and the Hall. For Mrs. Hawley was well qualified to enter into the remorse occasioned by a sight of Caroline Roxborough's grave; and Sir Robert, the grey-headed master of grey-headed retainers, to comprehend how my heart must have swelled within me on learning the fate of my father's faithful attendant.

And so, to avoid noticing the redness of my eyes and hoarseness of my voice, they went on talk — talk — talking of Lord John's beautiful set of bays, Lord John's exquisite new phaeton, Lord John's unrivalled model farm, Lord John's unbounded charity, and unwearied inquiries into the wants, backslidings, and sufferings of the people, — as though none but such a saint on earth were derserving the interesting wife, who was his crown of rubies: and to my jealous but shortsighted eyes, they seemed to take far more interest in his prospect of becoming the father of a son and heir, than about the sheep and oxen about to be roasted whole in honour of my majority.

"It afforded me almost sufficient consolation, my dear Wrottesley, for my grievous disappointment about Rainham," added Sir Robert, when at length I led to the subject of the discovery my morning's ramble had procured me, and frankly avowed the anguish it had produced in my heart, "to find that the Mr. Whichcote, whose nomination was so painful to us, was an intimate friend of my excellent neighbour at the Elms. The regard of such a man as Lord John, conveys a certificate of merit; and as nothing, alas! will now recall poor Car from the grave, I am gratified that the substitute for Henry Temple should prove an eligible person. I gave my hand the other day at the Elms to your *protégé*, Mr. Whichcote, as warmly as though I had not been forced as your trustee, to name him Rector of Rainham."

This was the unkindest cut of all. To have Sir Robert siding with Tom Whichcote, who, if the Rainham living had been really bartered with his brother in payment of a debt, doubtless considered himself as free from all obligation towards me and as much at liberty to brow-beat me on my own estate, as at a wining party at Cambridge, — was more than my fortitude could stand. Whichever way I turned at Wrottesley Hall, I should be surrounded by enemies or objects of reproach! The coldness of Lord John, — the hauteur of Lord Clanalbin's sister, — the sneering face of Tom Whichcote, — but above all, — the silent grave of Caroline, — were things to drive one thousands of miles out of the country.

My sole solace lay at the Chase. The persevering affection of a man so esteemed in the county as Sir Robert Hawley, would always secure me a certain degree of consideration; and he had already proposed to introduce me at the earliest opportunity to his friend Lord Meadowley, to whom I resolved to communicate my hopes of becoming a staunch supporter of his party, and my resolve to nail his colours to my mast: and we all know the importance assigned to the meanest cipher in England by taking up a strong political position.

Still warmer were the hopes of happiness I invested in an union with Albertine. She, whose graces of manner and attachingness of disposition had already, in a strange country, surrounded her with troops of friends, would obtain for me, when at the head of the noble establishment created by our united fortunes, the deference of which I was so covetous. Not all the Lord and Lady John Jocelyns in the world, — not all the Tom Whichcotes in or out of the pulpit, — could look us down or sneer us down, when enabled to afford to our neighbours the perfection of English hospitality seasoned by the piquancy of continental *savoir vivre*. To the kind, the lovely, the conciliating being who now exercised more than the influence of a daughter at Hawley Chase, I should be indebted, therefore, among other blessings for the public respect which, the more I *had shaken*, the more I had learned to appreciate.

When seated beside her tea-table that evening, though it was

pain and grief to me to pronounce the name of Roxborough, I could not but hazard an inquiry after my worthy friend the Archdeacon.

"In great force, Harry," replied Sir Robert, interposing; "and very proud of having contributed so largely to the comfort of my declining years, by escorting Mrs. Hawley hither. But I will not conceal from you, my dear boy, that you are quite out of his good books. He persists in attributing to *you* a large share in the wretched fate of his poor cousin."

"In all fairness, Sir," said I, colouring up, "he ought to assign to her brother the responsibility of her disappointment."

"On the contrary, he declares that, but for your persisting in your courtship in spite of her decided rejection and your knowledge of her engagement to another, Sir Gratian and his son would have relented in favour of Henry Temple. — He fancies that Wrottesley Hall thrown into the scale, decided matters irrevocably against her."

"In the first place," cried I, with growing eagerness, "I never proposed to poor Caroline Roxborough, and never was rejected."

"Is not that pretext a little sophistical?" inquired Sir Robert with an indulgent smile. "If not in words, my dear Henry, was not your attachment demonstrated in deeds? Not a soul in this part of the country but believed, on your friend Mr. Roxborough's showing, that you waited only the accomplishment of your majority to place your hand and fortune at her feet."

"God forbid that I should deny the impression made upon me by her attractions and her virtues!" said I with deep emotion. "But the most infatuated puppy upon earth would scarcely venture to push his pretensions against the iron barrier of a first love and solemn betrothment."

"To say the truth, Mr. Wrottesley," interrupted Albertine, with an arch smile, "you are accused of a decided *penchant* towards engaged young ladies. We have heard of a certain Mademoiselle de Bonval, and a certain Princess Crescentia, being sorely put to their fidelity by the ardour of your homage."

That rascal Felix! — The fellow had clearly been avenging his

sufferings at Lyarák by gossipping in the steward's room concerning my travelling adventures!

"Mélanie de Bonval," said I, swelling with rage, "is a finished coquette, who would consider herself ill-used if not flirted with. Princess Zriny received at my hands nothing beyond the attentions due to the young lady of a house, of whose hospitalities one is partaking."

"Which scarcely accounts, however," persisted Albertine, with the same provoking smile, "for certain orgies at Szent Miklós, when glasses were broken in the Princess's honour to an extent which compelled the guests to drink less honoured healths out of hunting cups, the following day."

True, by Jupiter! and a horrible evidence of the uncivilized state of his environs of Szent Miklós; where not a goblet, save of horn or wood, was to be bought, stolen, or borrowed, except by an express to Bisztricz or Hermannstadt. But as Felix was not in attendance on me in Transylvania, how could she possibly have learned all this? And since so well instructed in the incidents of our expedition, might she not be equally cognizant of my numerous falls from my horse, and all the scrapes and blunderings from which I had been extricated by the Prince's *Jagdmeister;* to say nothing of the sorry figure and bleeding face I exhibited when rescued from a thicket of thorns, where I was flung by a horse which any other of the party would have mastered? — A thousand biting jests, to which I had been subjected by the impertinence of Count Engelbert, — such as spectres effulgent with phosphorus, who beset my pillow by night, — and bands of Tsigány or gypsies who waylaid and appalled me whenever I lagged behind the hunt in the forest, — were perhaps registered in her mind with equal exactness! — What enemy could have done this? — What spy had tracked my steps for the sole purpose of rendering me ridiculous in the eyes of Albertine? —

I know not that I amended my cause by the assumption of an air of offended dignity. But Sir Robert perceiving I was hurt, and anxious to prevent all unpleasant feelings between us, considerately changed the conversation by inquiries respecting my *sister's marriage*: a subject, however, on which he seemed better

informed than myself: since he was able to tell me that the father of Mr. Howard Smith, a wealthy city merchant, had purchased for him the perpetual advowson of an excellent living; so that on the death of an incumbent eighty-nine years of age, he would come into more than two thousand a-year. — And I, who had taken upon myself to say bitter things to poor Emily, touching the unlucky rectory of Rainham!

Next day, drove over Lord and Lady John; evidently unprepared to see me, but in habits of daily intercourse with Mrs. Hawley, such as were likely to arise between two accomplished young women of the same age and pursuits. I had no excuse for feeling vexed that less than six month's acquaintance should have produced an almost sisterly intimacy between them. But it did provoke me to find myself seated there, an utter stranger to Lord John, with whom I had been two years at college; while the two ladies, no longer Lady John and Mrs. Hawley but Mabella and Albertine, were gossipping together like school-girls about Berlin patterns and Rossini's duets! It is true that when our formal presentation was over, he professed a desire for neighbourly intercourse between us. Still, the terms in which his good-will demonstrated itself, were as though a man at the top of Mont Blanc were addressing a person in the Vale of Chamouny!

It was probably his intention to make use of me to co-operate in his plans for the education of the poor, and the introduction of temperance societies: making the virtue and merit of the project his own, and leaving the trouble and responsibility on my shoulders.

Before they rose to depart, I heard Mrs. Hawley propose a dinner-party, in the course of a day or two, to bring us again together. But, as I either heard or fancied I heard the name Dr. Temple included in the project, I excused myself so promptly when the scheme came to be discussed aloud, on the plea of being obliged to return to London on my way to my sister's wedding, that, as soon as the Jocelyns were gone, Sir Robert called me into his room.

"Surely I was not thinking of leaving Yorkshire previous to

the twentieth? — Surely I intended to be present at the celebration of my coming of age?"

I assured him that it would be a great relief to me to stand excused.

"But had I ever heard of such a thing as a young man known to be in the country and in good health, absenting himself on an occasion usually considered the most opportune moment for a declaration of his public views?"

"In most cases, my dear Sir," said I, "a man coming into the enjoyment of such estates as mine, possesses family ties and relations in the county, which surround him with friends and acquaintances. Mine is a peculiar case. — I know no one. — I have no relations to surround me. — Were I inclined to celebrate an event interesting only to myself in the way it is usually done, by a ball to the neighbourhood, I am not acquainted with twenty people to invite."

"But there is no question of your entertaining the neighbourhood, my dear Harry," persisted Sir Robert. "All I wish and expect you to do is to show yourself to the poorer tenantry, who are to dine in a temporary building for the erection of which Gripham has already given orders; and to open the ball given to your tradesmen and farmers at Wrottesley Hall, after they have dined together, under Gripham's presiding, at the Wrottesley Arms."

"What you wish and expect from me, dear Sir, shall always be done!" said I, raising his hand to my lips with as much deference as though it had been that of Princess Zriny; "though I will not conceal from you that there is nothing very attractive in the oceans of punch, and salvoes of huzzas inevitable on such an occasion. Meanwhile, I am compelled to leave you to-morrow, for a week, to do duty at my sister's wedding. On Thursday next, I will be again by your side."

The indulgent liberality with which Sir Robert had systematically overlooked my excesses and provided for my exigencies, under the impression that perfect confidence in money matters subsisted between us, placed it wholly beyond his conjectures, that to *me* the day of coming of age conveyed only the idea of a *meeting of* creditors; or that "coming to my estate" was but an-

other word for liquidating my debts. The only sinister view, therefore, he took of the 20th of January was, that it was a pity the weather should be so inclement as to threaten half my tenantry with severe catarrhs in honour of the day: — concurring with other sober-minded individuals in wishing that all heirs apparent could be born in summer time, that during the out-door pastimes of ox-roasting and firework displaying, the earth might exhibit a more genial costume than icicles and snow.

But to me, alas! the fatal day to which poor old Nicholls had so often referred with looks as triumphant as though it had been the anniversary of Waterloo, afforded the signal for gathering together a flight of cormorants prepared to pick the flesh from my bones. Had I been the same oppressed starveling who watched the approach of daylight at Hentsfield, three years before, I should have experienced on reaching the close of my pupillage, the unbounded joy of attaining mastership of my own soul and body; and gratefully thanked God that both were strong and unblemished, to enable me to breast the contending waves of life. But now, because overwhelmed with prosperity, which had fallen like a dead weight on my energies and crushed and scattered them in every direction, — I beheld in my waking dreams in place of joyful faces congratulating me on my twenty-first birthday, a herd of greasy, hook-nosed, hawk-eyed, rusty, fusty, Levys and Shadrachs, each with his bond and knife, prepared to cut away a pound of flesh! —

An interview with these extortioners, to ascertain their intentions and manifest my own, was indispensable previous to the publicity of my rejoicings at Wrottesley Hall. For a report having gained ground through Charles Roxborough of my intention to settle abroad, the blood-suckers were growing uneasy respecting the legalization of their claims. To pay at sight the sum of £32,000 to which, including interest at 35 per cent, my liabilities amounted, would of course be impossible. But intending to satisfy them to the last doit, it would be easy to renew their bills the moment I acquired legal independance, and pay them off in the course of a month or two, by raising money on mortgage.

of his appearance was not misplaced; — that his mind was thoroughly disordered.

"Thirteen thousand pounds lost by that day's work!" continued he, resuming his former tone and pace. "Every shilling swallowed up by it. What was left of poor Car's reversion might have been sold to fill the gap. But as her mother's settlements unluckily would have it, — dying unmarried, her rights devolved to her sister; and Fortrose has been made too sharp by Charley's training, to renounce a tittle of his rights."

It was all plain enough now. — *He* had been talking of Miss Jenny, — while *I* was thinking of his sainted child! —

But I soon ceased to wonder that the hocussed mare should be uppermost in his mind. The last losses of his son had brought his affairs to a final crisis. The poor old gentleman had been arrested, — had been in a spunging-house. — With the unprincipled cleverness which his father had always been the first to applaud and encourage, Charles had contrived to fasten the responsibility of his bills upon the shoulders of Sir Gratian.

"It was best so," said he, in explaining to me all he had undergone. "About a poor old fellow like me, no one is at the pains of inquiring. — No one missed *me*, — no one made mischief out of *my* disappearance from society. Whereas, if Charles had not been forthcoming, it would have done him irreparable injury. In the set in which Charles is living, such a catastrophe would have been his ruin!"

"But you do not, I hope, mean to say, Sir," cried I, "that it was on this account his liabilities were transferred to your shoulders?"

"No — I should be loath, very loath to think *that!*" faltered the old man, with a sigh as heavy as that I had uttered a few minutes before. "Though I can't but say, I sometimes fear that my son thinks less of such things than he ought. — But the truth is, Wrottesley, Charley's so popular, — Charley 's such a general favourite, that he isn't allowed a minute to himself to give proper thought to his affairs. If he 'd been sharper after his helpers, Miss Jenny was as sure of her race as— But the case *of hocussing* was literally all but proved!"

"I am grieved to find, Sir, you should have been the sufferer by such a breach of trust," said I, more gravely. "I fear, you do not find in London compensation for the pure air of the Elms; — I fear —"

"Compensation?" interrupted Sir Gratian. "*Compensation?* — My dear young friend, — I havn't known a day's health or happiness since I quitted Yorkshire! — Ask the Archdeacon, Harry. The Archdeacon 's a good guess at all I 've gone through. When I agreed to let the Elms, — after Charley's bad Doncaster, (you recollect that sad break down of Marmaduke's?) he put such a flattering picture afore me of the life I might lead in town a'ter marrying the girls, — that I should live with him, — walk with him, — drive with him, — belong to his clubs, — be cherished by his friends —"

"In all which you were deceived!" cried I, with indignation. "I see it in your looks!" —

"No, no! — not *deceived!*" interrupted the old gentleman. "Charley 's incapable of deceiving me. Charley 's too good a fellow to do any thing wilfully unkind. 'T wasn't *his* fault, you know, if he failed to get me into Boodle's. And I can assure you, 't was by nobody's wish but my own I quitted the Albany."

"You do *not* reside with him then?"

"How could I, I only ask you? Six days in the week, Charley has dinner engagements, — (dines with all the first people in Lon'on, I can tell you, — from royalty down to ambassadors and dukes!) and on the seventh, he dines at one or other of his clubs, — so what sort of a life, pray, awaited me at his chambers? Then, our hours were so different. — When *he* came home to bed a'ter his frolics, *I* was for getting up; all which was ill-convenient for his servants and made them saucy. So, to set matters straight, I thought it better to set up a snug little lodging of my own, — a two-pair, in Cork Street, — convenient for dining at the Blue Posts. But *that* Charley has put a stop to, — fearing it might get wind who I was, and that meddling people might think it odd *his* father dining at such a place."

"And what have you adopted instead, Sir?" said I, my heart-ache increasing at every word.

Cutting short his questions, I came at once to the purport of my visit. — "Would he accompany me to his friends, Messrs. Levy and Shadrach, as witness to the proposals I was about to make them?"

"Why could I not go by myself? He had always found them straight-forward, fair-dealing people. Or if a witness were indispensable, why not take Hampden, who was well known to them both?"

"I am not on terms with Hampden to ask him a favour," said I. "Besides, he is probably at Melton."

"With a ten days' frost set in?"

"At Brighton then; certainly, not in town. But if inconvenient to you to oblige me," said I, "I will take my new lawyer Sumpsit, or his junior partner, — a rope-walk firm, — well up to the ways and means of such miscreants as Shadrach and Co."

As it was by no means the policy of my friend under the eider-down to have the transactions between us sifted by men of the law, he found it both easy and pleasant to accept my proposal.

"In three quarters of an hour, he was at my service. Would I read the morning paper in his sitting-room while he dressed?"

Instead of reading the morning papers, I amused myself with the visiting and invitation cards in his rack: no breach of confidence, since they were exhibited as part of the furniture of his chambers. All that the royalty and aristocracy of England could do to render life agreeable to this man, was done. If his grey-headed old father, in his shabby brown coat, waited at his door to know how he had rested, the Marchioness of L— was sure of "the honour of his company" every Saturday night after the opera, — the Marchioness of S— on the night following: — while every other day of the week was marked by some Apician dinner at Lord S.'s or Sir G. W.'s, followed by *soirées* of every shade and degree of exclusivism.

The brighter lights and deeper shadows of his life concealed their mysteries within a bureau boasting a Chubb-lock as complicated as that of the closest safe in Lombard Street. Billet-doux and acceptances calculated to place more than one happy *family in a state* of combustion, were united there with the se-

crets of the betting-book and files of unpaid bills, bearing the successive dates of 1818, 1819, 1821, 1822, (as well as exorbitant interest;) — for it was impossible to affect more order in his disorders than Sir Gratian's thankless son.

In spite of his vocation of rouéism, the walls of the richly furnished room were not, according to the custom of bachelor chambers, adorned with portraits of opera-dancers, or Venuses despoiled of the chastity of the antique by some tawdry strip of drapery whose introduction serves only to create immodest ideas. Engravings after the portraits of royal personages, presented by the royal originals, the frame of each being embellished with a royal crown occupied the places of honour: — the only effigies of private individuals admitted in rivalship, being two small portraits in oils, of Miss Chester and Miss Jenny. How rejoiced I felt at having redeemed the sketch of Minna and Brenda, (poor Adela and Caroline!) — from appearing in such company.

When Roxborough, after full three quarters of an hour of ablution, brushing, and polishing, made his appearance, as usual dressed to perfection and emitting only a sufficient tinge of *Bouquet de Florence* to overcome the woolliness of broad-cloth, I begged I might be no obstacle to his breakfasting. — But having reminded me that, between his chocolate and a *consommé aux croutons* at White's, at two o'clock, he seldom took any thing, I remembered the shattered state of a digestion to which solid food was impossible more than once in the four-and-twenty hours: and we started forthwith on our expedition. I was not sorry to find that, in the interval, his cabriolet, (as yet the decent incognito of a brougham was not,) had been brought round for our use; for more than one of his familiar spirits resided in a quarter of the town as little agreeable to approach at noonday, as safe to approach at midnight.

As we reached Oxendon Street, in which stood the den of Shadrach, the least practicable of the blood-sucking tribe of Mordecai who held my signature in their hands, Roxborough proposed going in first, to ascertain whether the old man were at home and in a temper to be dealt with, — a suggestion I was wrong to adopt. — But after waiting more than ten minutes at

the door, in a frosty atmosphere which sent the mingled breaths of the horse and the tiger who was holding it, into the air, as from the valve of a steam-engine, I jumped out and by a hurried knock gave the signal of my impatience.

The door was opened by Charley himself, apparently in a state of great irritation.

"The old dog is in one of his fits of perversity," said he, in a whisper. "I hardly recommend your seeing him to-day."

"To-day or never!" I replied. "To-morrow, I must be off to my sister's wedding."

"He says," resumed Roxborough, still whispering, and detaining me on the threshold, "that he counted on the money for the twentieth, (four thousand seven hundred, he tells me is the amount — three thousand lent, and seventeen hundred interest,) and have it he must!" —

"Have it he certainly will *not!*" said I coolly. "It was understood between us at the time of the transaction that, though the bond was drawn out to meet the attainment of my majority, accommodation was to be afforded me for raising the money."

"Understood between you at the time of the transaction!" cried Roxborough, shrugging his shoulders. "How *can* you talk so like an ass! When was anything ever understood between a man and a Jew, unless 'nominated in the bond?' Shadrach adheres of course to the letter of his agreement; and unless you do the same, I am afraid you run some chance of not being allowed to preside in peace, on the twentieth, over the broaching of your October."

"At all events, I will see what can be done with the old brute," said I. And unannounced by the ragged stripling who usually officiated as his foot-boy, I pushed my way up the filthy stairs into Shadrach's unsavoury sanctum.

To me, the Jewish race is an object of instinctive abhorrence. Their very savour is as great an abomination in my nostrils, as in those of Queen Bess. But till that day, I had always fancied it was their crawling obsequiousness, — their slavish slavering subjection, which moved my disgust; — whereas, on finding *my creditor* assume the tone and attitude of Shylock, I began to

creep in my turn. After listening to insolent taunts and menaces from the withered lips which had hitherto addressed me as a slave a satrap, I was right glad to escape out of his robber's cave.

"The fact is," observed Roxborough, who in his turn seemed a little flustered when we found ourselves once more alone in the cab, "Shadrach has some little excuse just now for his exasperation! He was shamefully done last week by Hampden; who is off to Naples, after getting himself appointed attaché to the mission for the sole purpose of security against proceedings."

"But why am *I* to pay for Hampden's want of integrity?" cried I in a rage. "Shadrach knows that I am both able and willing to pay him."

"*Able*, perhaps," interrupted Roxborough.

"And willing!" said I in a firm and clear voice. "Before this day month, not a guinea of my debts shall be outstanding; though, by raising difficulties for the purpose of annoying me, he may perhaps dispose me to raise some in my turn."

"I wish to heavens you were out of his hands," said Charles, thoughtfully. "You heard what he said about making such young English nobs as were in his power, pay the penalty of those who had defrauded him? — I heartily wish you were out of his hands!" —

"Let him do his worst," said I in the defying tone of a man who has lost his temper, "and he may get the worst of it himself!"—

"Let him do no such thing!" retorted Roxborough. "*His* character cannot be rendered blacker by the foulest exposure; whereas on yours, which is spotless, the smallest speck of mud will be perceptible. In the eyes of a large portion of the community, including squaretoes like old Hawley, and old Courtfield, such specks defy the bleaching of even twice eighteen thousand a-year! — And again, I say, I wish you were out of his hands."

"And so do I!" cried I, harassed at length into sincerity. "But I have neither time nor inclination to go through the necessary forms for raising this sum elsewhere, to pay him off; and have reasons of my own, for not placing my Yorkshire men of business in my confidence."

"I tell you what, Wrottesley," said my companion, slacken-

ing his pace as we turned the further corner of Leicester Fields, on our way to the Minories, (to visit another of the money-lending confraternity, of the name of Snettering;) "if you can really return the sum within six weeks, I think I know a man who would accommodate you without much trouble. It is one of my tradesmen who, after Titan's break down at Goodwood last year, lent me somewhere about the same sum, for a month, till I could get my father's signature, for a bonus of five hundred pounds."

"And this man is still get-at-able?"

"I don't think he would like to have his name handed about, or be applied to as a common money-lender," rejoined Charles. "But if you are willing to pay the premium I have mentioned, I will speak to him this very morning, give you his answer at dinner, and you can make out a promissory note, payable on the 20th of February for £5,200, value received, to be exchanged with me against the money; — always provided you can get the other fellows to come into your terms about renewing their bills."

I had sworn to myself more times than any one would believe, during my stay on the continent, that no possible consideration should ever again induce me to enter into a money transaction with Charles Roxborough. But the force of habit and dread of exposure were too much for me. The venerable face of my guardian and candid countenance of Mrs. Hawley, seemed to rise before me, animated by indignation and disgust. I thought of the Archdeacon's outbreak of lamentation, I thought of

> Reflection's stab, the pitying friend
> With shoulder shrugg'd, and sorry!

And when my companion, in the elation of having prevailed over the scruples of the half-dozen usurers with whom we had to deal, proposed to dispense with further unpleasant interviews betwixt me and Shadrach, by taking the whole affair upon his own shoulders, on my simple signature of the bill for £5,200, I thought myself a lucky dog to get my head out of the noose without further abrasions.

Next morning, I left town for Hentsfield. It was not till *after the* lapse of many months, I discovered that the exasperation of Shadrach was produced by private information afforded

him by Roxborough that I was on the eve of returning to the continent, and intended leaving him in the hands of my lawyers; and that the "obliging tradesman," was no other than Roxborough himself, who had often before doubled his floating capital by lending it under a feigned name on exorbitant interest, to some spendthrift friend of whose necessities he was the confidant!

CHAPTER XXXII.

To solemnize this day, the glorious sun
Stays in his course and plays the alchemist;
Turning, with splendour of his precious eye,
The meagre, cloddy earth to glittering gold.
The yearly course that brings this day about
Shall never see it but a holiday. SHAKSPEARE.

LITTLE as I had ever attached myself to Hentsfield, it was a comfort to find myself in my old home again, after all my wanderings and thwartings. Could I have been received under the porch by poor old Nicholls, nothing would have been wanting to my satisfaction. For my mother and sisters were in the highest spirits. — Every body wore a holiday face. My wedding gifts excited general admiration; and satisfied my family that I agreed with the rest of the world in considering Emily more likely to be a happy woman as Mrs. Howard Smith, with an income of two thousand a-year, than as the gadding wife of a rattling Captain of Hussars.

My worthy mother said all that is usually said on such occasions by elderly ladies subject to rheumatic gout: that "it relieved her mind from an enormous weight to have obtained so happy a home for one of her dear girls, and so excellent a protector for both;" and my new brother-in-law, who in the tea-partying days of his curacy had contracted a habit of smirking, was forced to bow and smile convulsively, fifty times a day, as he heard the favourite phrase reiterated to successive guests.

Little weddings are usually merrier than great ones; and Emily's was a favourable sample. — Since my attainment of fortune, my sisters had become immensely popular; and when my return to England transpired, with the addition that I came

expressly to be present at the wedding, the office of bridesmaid was at a premium. But having, in addition to Dora, already engaged three out of the four Miss Stormonts and a young sister of the bridegroom to make up the half-dozen, their pale blue pelisses and bonnets being intended to throw out in still more charming relief the white lace and orange flowers of the bride, no less than nine applications from the ambitious daughters of neighbouring squires were politely rejected.

"I fancied from your letters, mother," said I, on finding myself alone with the old lady, (whose thoughts were sadly distracted from her son's arrival by that of certain raised pies and cases of champagne from Gunter's, for the morrow's breakfast) "that you were not quite on such good terms with Crowsden Grange as formerly. How comes it that the Miss Stormonts are to be bridesmaids?"

"You are right in supposing there was a little coolness," replied Mrs. Powerscourt. — "That foolish, flirting nephew of Sir Thomas's, whom every body pronounced to be in love with Dora, though he was keeping up the farce all the time, at the Grange, of intending to marry his cousin Rose when she was old enough, was the cause of much of bitter feeling."

"Reginald Stormont?"

"Reginald Stormont. You met him abroad, I believe; for it was from his letters to his cousins we heard that ridiculous story about your climbing trees after a bird's-nest at Baden."

"But what put an end to the rivalship between the young ladies?" said I, — not particularly anxious to hear recited my own chapter of his history.

"Only that he is going to be married to some third person, — some rich foreigner."

"Mélanie de Bonval, of course!" said I, with utter contempt of the fortune-hunter.

"So that *now*," resumed my mother, not noticing my ejaculation, "Dora and her young friends will have the comfort of abusing him together. Your sisters, however, seldom mention his name; having had two or three squabbles with the Stormonts *about the* story he invented of your making a punchinello of

yourself to amuse the Grand Duchess of Baden, and being called *Vogelnester* for your pains."

To avenge myself on Crowsden Grange for having lent an ear to such calumnies, though forced by order of precedence to give my arm at the wedding breakfast to Lady Stormont, I devoted my smiles for the remainder of the day to Howard Smith's little sister; — a pretty prattling ninny of seventeen, white, slender, and tender as a spring chicken, and the belle of the Richmond balls; whose head was stuffed as full of Hampton Court officers as a child's wooden box of leaden soldiers. The consequence was, that her rival in pertness, Miss Rose, the spoiled child of the Grange, threatened us more than once in the course of the day, with a fit of hysterics.

Miss Stormont's blooming face had expanded so exuberantly since I saw her, that I longed to place a slate under her cheek, as the gardeners do to a full-ripe melon; while Ellen, the Spanish-looking beauty was rendered haughtier than ever by her conquest of a distinguished foreigner at one of the Hatfield House Tuesdays, since which, however, the twist of his mustachios had not been seen in Hertfordshire; and finding from Dora that her friend intended to cross-question me concerning this evanescent hero, — (a Count something or other, who was chamberlain to some German Prince or King, they did not exactly know which or where) — I kept as far aloof as the range of the breakfast-table would admit. But while avoiding Scylla I fell upon Charybdis; and had to undergo the plaintive lamentations of the elegiac Louisa, over the loss Crowsden Grange was destined to sustain in the society of my mother and sisters.

A little alarmed at the idea that the authoress of my days and her unmarried daughter might project a settlement at Wrottesley Hall, it was a relief when Louisa Stormont condescended to explain that, the lease of Hentsfield being on the eve of expiring, the second son of the late Mr. Whichcote of Barming intended to make it his residence.

"And we are all so afraid," added she, with a smile, melting enough to turn the heart of a rhinoceros, "that you will persuade Mrs. Powerscourt to settle near you in Yorkshire!"

"Yorkshire differs widely from the counties round London," said I, fortifying myself proudly in my cravat. "Except in the immediate neighbourhood of the manufacturing towns, there are few country seats adapted to my mother's limited fortune."

And away I hurried to flirt with little Lucy Smith, and hear wonderful stories of the **th Light Dragoons, and her own hunting exploits with the stag-hounds.

After learning how short a time Hentsfield was to remain in my mother's occupation, I felt less surprised at the recklessness with which she had turned the house out of-doors, in honour of my sister's nuptials. The removal of a partition between the housekeeper's room and adjoining parlour, had created a supper-room; while the drying-ground was Benjamin Edgintonized into a very tolerable ball-room, — the adjacent laundry converted by a forest of ever-greens into a splendid ante-chamber; and, thanks to the flimsy arrangements which enabled poor Hentsfield for once in its life to return the hospitalities of an excellent neighbourhood, it was my fate to overhear, behind a wall of laurustinus and rhododendron certain allusions to my own prospects and intentions, which set my whole frame into a ferment.

"My dear Ma'am," said the gruffer of two voices conversing familiarly together in the adjoining room, "in spite of all that was said of his abilities at the University, — his subsequent conduct has proved him to be a very, *very* silly young man! To sacrifice the noble prospects awaiting him for such a woman as this Mrs. Hawley, — a Papist, — a coquette, — and little better, I fear, than an adventuress!"

"But is your Ladyship certain," replied the other voice, "that the report is to be depended upon?"

"As sure as that I am alive, Ma'am!" rejoined the former speaker. "The acquaintance commenced on the continent. While his family believed him to be travelling for the completion of his education and instruction of his mind, the poor weak creature became entangled in an attachment which, mark my words, will soon end in marriage!"

I, at least, marked her words; albeit some officious block-*head, who just* then sauntered up to ask me why I was not dancing

and offer me some neglected partner, prevented my hearing more.

"I don't know why I am surprised," thought I, "that my intimacy with Albertine, and the happy hopes to which it has given rise, should have excited surmises. To be a mark for vulgar curiosity is the inevitable penalty of possessing such a fortune as mine. For some foolish gossip in Paris to write to another foolish gossip in London that Mr. Wrottesley was seen at the opera with Mrs. Hawley, suffices to create such a report as these two impertinent women are discussing!"

All I gathered further of their dialogue was spoken by the bass voice.

"Don't believe it!" said she; "it is a rumour invented by himself for bad purposes of his own. Sir Robert Hawley may have taken his grandson's widow into his house as a matter of charity. But, depend upon it, he has no more thoughts of making her heiress to his fortune, than of bequeathing it to a lunatic asylum!" —

Full of anxiety to discover the interlocutors in this familiar conversation, I made the best of my way from the tent-like ball-room into the laundry, — I beg its pardon — the ante-room adjoining, which backed upon the spot where I had been sitting. But alas! the doorway was blocked up by a roomy country gentlewoman, trying to get up a flirtation for a son nearly as lanky as myself in my Eagle House days, with the fubsy daughter of one of the county members; and by the time I reached the bench where the two gossips had been seated, it was occupied by Mr. Howard Smith, sen., who was talking very heavy stock exchange with a retired share-broker from Alban's. To *them* the very name of Mrs. Hawley must have been unknown.

"Nothing the matter, I trust, my dear Mr. Wrottesley?" inquired the Widow Whichcote of Barming, on overhearing imprecations muttered between my teeth; for, not having been let into the secret of the turf transactions between the present representative of her family and Charles Roxborough, the old lady regarded me with reverential gratitude as having conferred a noble piece of preferment on her favourite son. But while I politely

released myself from her officious persecution, I became strengthened in my resolution to quit Hentsfield on the morrow. Before the temporary room could be half carted off again, or the copper of the laundry reset, I would reach the Chase. Sir Robert should explain himself, — Albertine should explain herself, — and my own explanations reward their candour.

Before the evening was over, however, under the influence of the champagne with which I had been compelled to propose, and do honour to the healths of "the bride and bridegroom," "the fair bridesmaids, and may they shortly become brides," — "the ladies," — "the county members," and Heaven knows who or what besides, — I was warmed up into such a fit of hospitality towards one or two of my boyish companions now, like myself, progressed into whiskers and Wellington boots, as actually to invite them to Wrottesley Hall for the 20th, to assist in doing the honours to my tenants: — an engagement which the fame of my preserves would secure from being neglected. — Having turned a deaf ear to Emily's hints that her brother's roof would be a far more respectable shelter for a honeymoon than a Brighton Hotel, in the softness of a maudlin hour I engaged two of the younger Whichcotes, and several brother cricketers of my washed-out nankin days, to come and admire my rockets and triumphal arches.

In London, I had already enlisted several of my college friends who fell in my way. — It was not fine people or fashionables I wanted. — Neither banquet nor ball was in preparation. But I disliked the idea of presenting myself to my assembled tenants unbacked by the presence of nearer and younger friends than Messrs. Gripham, Sneak, and Klose.

"And now then," said I, half aloud, when, two days after the Hentsfield bridal, I found myself once more approaching the scene of my future glories in the full enjoyment of health, wealth, and my own good opinion, "now then, for the climax of my destinies; for my worthy guardian will unquestionably select the crisis of my coming of age to vacate his seat in Parliament in my favour, and sanction my pretensions to the hand of Albertine. I, *at least, have no* cause to arraign the *blindness* of fortune! While

others go down in the world, or are forced into expatriation, or sell themselves to some heiress in St. Mary Axe, — here am I, with a golden shower perpetually pouring on my head, — solicited, by a man who four years ago had never seen my face, to become the husband of one of the loveliest as well as wealthiest women in the kingdom!"

To my usual Castles in the Air was now appended a bower of bliss, such as the most poetical of painters or architects never imagined; and when weary of the perfume of its roses, I amused myself with reconsidering the preliminaries of the forthcoming festivities, which I had settled in my transit through town: — the orchestra I had engaged, — the jovial crew I had invited, — and the extension I had given to the order for the execution of which Gunter was already at work.

Sir Robert received me as though I had been the other Wrottesley revived from the grave, and laughed heartily when I pinned to his no longer old-fashioned coat the silver favour sent him by my sister; while Mrs. Hawley, all smiles and blushes, listened graciously to my account of the Hentsfield festivities, and accepted the offering of a wedding-cake covered with orange blossom, turtle-doves, and true lovers' knots, with which I had taken care to provide myself for her behoof. But for the nervousness produced by her mysterious insight into my Hungarian adventures, I might have found courage to throw myself at once at her feet, and remind her of the words of encouragement she had breathed into my ear when we parted in the Rue de Rivoli. — But dreading her arch looks and repartees, I determined to address myself in the first instance to Sir Robert; — who, under the excitement of the approaching event, was as gay as a colt. Neither he, nor his house, nor any thing that was his resembled the Sir Robert, or the Hawley Chase of the preceding year, more than *I* resembled the gawky school-boy whom none but poor old Nicholls delighted to honour.

"I little expected, my dear Harry," said he, when we found ourselves once more alone together over our claret, — "that I should survive to witness your coming of age. — My family misfortunes had so got the better of me at the time of my poor friend

Wrottesley's death, that I felt almost angry with him for having delegated to me so serious a charge. — It seems however, to have brought a blessing with it. I am stronger, and better, and happier now, than I was then. — But that does not blind me to the fact, Harry, that I have reached the moment appointed for man to find rest from his labours. — My lamp has burnt out its time; and I must look to those whom I would fain have trim it when I am no more."

My face became of course composed to the proper measure of elongation; for I felt that the critical moment was approaching.

"At one time," said he, — "childless and despairing as I was, I thought of letting the law take its course, and leaving my estate to my next of kin. But since (thanks partly to *you*, my dear boy,) I became acquainted with Mrs. Hawley, I determined otherwise. — I hope you will agree with me, Harry, that I cannot better mark my affection for the son and grandson taken from me, than by adopting her whom they so dearly loved!"

"Certainly not, Sir," said I; making my response as clear as that of a parish clerk.

"I have consequently made my will," resumed Sir Robert, "(of which I have appointed you sole executor) and bequeathed to the dear angel who has just quitted us, every shilling I possess. I have shackled the bequest with but one condition, Harry," continued he, — smiling like the skies in May: — "a single condition, of which you, at least, will scarcely disapprove. I require her to marry again, — and marry an Englishman. So let us drink health and prosperity to the choice, whoever it may be, of our dear Albertine."

It seemed scarcely fair to pledge him in such a sentiment! — But her inclinations were probably well known to him as to my self; and I would not thwart him. "But though I have made this marriage a testamentary condition," he resumed, "it would of course be a far greater source of happiness to witness its fulfilment during my life-time. — All I desire is to see her happy: and then, close my eyes in peace!"

Could I resist such an appeal? No! after swallowing and *making him* swallow another glass of claret, I proceeded to

unfold my views; assuring him that the noble bequest he announced was the only obstacle to my offering my heart and hand to his grand-daughter.

"Don't talk to me of obstacles," cried the old gentleman, with overbrimming eyes. "Do you suppose I will allow qualms of false delicacy to interfere with the fruition of a scheme which for the last three years has been the sustaining staff of my life? It is precisely because I wish my fortune to become yours, my dear boy, that I have made it hers; — for, from words she has accidentally let fall, Harry, I learned long ago that her affections were pledged before she ever set foot at Hawley Chase! When she admitted the object of her love to be an Englishman, you may imagine my joy in penetrating the secret of her innocent soul."

Whereupon we filled another bumper in honour of her innocent soul; and it was settled between us that, in compliance with the habits of her foreign education, Sir Robert should be the first to acquaint her with my pretensions to her hand.

"Let me alone, Harry, — let me alone!" cried he, chafing together his wan, transparent hands. "You shall find that, in spite of the Archdeacon's saucy assertions, I am not so old yet but I can urge a love-plea in a lady's ear, — provided always it be not on my own account. If I only live to witness your mutual happiness, my dear boy, I shall sleep the quieter in my grave!"

A hearty shake of the hand prefaced his departure for the drawing-room; and while I sipped my aromatic coffee alone, I could not but picture to myself the insupportable prolixity with which Sir Robert was delivering himself of a declaration which, had he permitted it, *I* would have concentrated into a single phrase, and communicated in a simple whisper.

The minutes passed on, till they shaped themselves into quarters of an hour; and when at length more than four of these elapsed without bringing my ambassador to announce the triumphant success of his mission, I began to fear that the second bottle of claret had been an imprudence; and that the poor old gentleman might be thicker of speech than was desirable for so delicate an explanation. I grew so fidgetty, that half-a-

dozen turns round the room, in double quick time, did not allay my impatience.

At length the door opened, and Sir Robert re-appeared; but neither elate with wine nor victory. He came slowly towards me, took my hands fondly into his, and looking into my face with eyes which either wine or weeping had nearly swollen out of his head, observed in faltering accents, — "We must not think of it, Harry. There is no hope for you. Of all my disappointments, perhaps, this last is the most irreparable and the most bitter. Her hand and heart are pledged to another!"

If that other, whoever he might be, had found himself in my presence at that moment, a few minutes I really believe would have sufficed to reduce him to atoms. To lose at once the fair object of my choice and the prospects which were to re-establish me on the golden pinnacle from which I had precipitated myself, was too much to be borne! To spare the feelings of my kind old guardian, however, I was forced to put some constraint on my own.

"I feel sadly responsible for your mortification in the business, Harry," — he persisted, after sinking as if thoroughly exhausted, into his easy chair; "for I ought to have been more explicit with her concerning my plans and intentions, before I invited her from a home where she was happy, to place her at the head of this house. But when she came, she seemed so disposed to comply with my wishes, and agreed with me so warmly whenever I spoke in your praise, that I thought myself as sure of a Wrottesley for my successor, (your second son to take the name of Hawley, and succeed, at your death, to the Chase,) as though the marriage were accomplished, and the child already born and playing at my feet."

"My *dear* Sir!" I exclaimed. — But, choked by a variety of emotions, I could not utter another word.

"When I sanctioned her remodelling the house and establishment," he continued, "it was because I knew she was familiar with your tastes, and fancied she was bent on indulging them. And to think that all the time her tacit acquiescence whenever I *referred to the* probability of her early re-marriage — 're-mar-

riage with an Englishman,' — referred to another! There is one comfort, however, Harry! She has chosen a successor for my grandson such as no one can disapprove. The representative of one of the most ancient families in England! I can raise no reasonable objection to a child of *his* assuming my name and filling my place." —

I shuddered.

"It is for *you* only I feel the change," he continued, seizing my hand; "and but that your noble and unencumbered fortune places you beyond all necessity for my assistance, I can scarcely express how much I should be cut up by Mrs. Hawley's determination."

No need for me to inquire the name of this "representative of one of the most ancient families in England!" — Reginald Stormont was the man! — I remembered him ensconced behind her at the opera! — I remembered him on the road, when he drove down Nestor Platicheff to Les Epines! — Above all, — I remembered the allusions made by Count Engelbert at one of our Szent Miklós orgies, to certain old Pisa adventures, which *ought* to have prevented my ever again troubling my head about Mrs. Hawley.

To his correspondence with the latter, Hawley Chase was doubtless indebted for its insight into my Hungarian adventures; and it was to his matrimonial engagement with the wealthy Albertine the disappointed mother of Rose Stormont was referring, at the Hentsfield ball, in allusions which my besotted vanity referred wholly to myself."

Whether as Stormont or D'Estomont, the travelled coxcomb had proved my evil genius! His unmeaning homage had rendered poor Dora ridiculous, and reduced his pretty little cousin to despair. At Baden, he had thwarted and piqued me into nearly breaking my neck; at Hawley Chase, he still ran some risk of breaking my heart! —

I had not courage to confront Albertine that night, — the treacherous, *treacherous* Albertine; for I am still convinced that her coquetry towards me was from the first a matter of calculation. Though Sir Robert assured me she was desirous of affording me the most complete explanations and apologies, and

appealing to me for the continuance of my friendship, I was determined not to risk being softened by her crocodile tears. I could not stand being placed before her in a humiliating light. In spite of all my poor old guardian could say or do, — in spite of frost, snow, and sleet, — I ordered my horse, and on a moonless night, rode over, "splash, splash — tramp, tramp," as impetuously as Leonora's lover, to Wrottesley Hall!

I was wrong. The house was turned topsy-turvy by preparations for the twentieth. The late-lighted fire smoked. The surprised servants appeared to be walking on their heads. It was the first time I had slept in the house since the death of poor old Nicholls; and oh! how I missed the tottering tread of the worthy creature approaching my chamber-door, to ask whether there was any thing I wanted!

For hours, I found it impossible to retire to bed. A confusion of hateful impressions upstarting around me, indicative of the scorns and molestations awaiting me in the world, appeared to "murder sleep." No more Castles in the Air! — If my busy fancy constructed any thing now, it was a cell! —

At length, hoping to escape for a time the smarting of my feelings, I threw myself on my pillow; and soon my disturbed dreams proved that something might be more disquieting than my waking thoughts. The visions of Richard in his tent can scarcely have been more painful than mine. First came "my late revered relative" — the man whom I had never seen, and who always wore to my mind's eye the shapeless yet fearful form represented by my first nightmare under that roof; and scarcely were the reproaches silenced wherein he set before me the vanity and weakness by which I had disgraced his princely bequest, when in glided the mild, beseeching, but admonitory spirit of poor Caroline Roxborough, praying that God might forgive me, and bidding me "go and sin no more!"

But the empty silence into which they disappeared, disappeared almost as quickly as themselves. A sneering, mocking crew was close upon them: Platicheff, with his hollow laugh, — Count Engelbert, with his polished irony, — and Zriny, with his *aristocratic scorn*; surveying me with wonder and contempt, and

expressing their amazement that a raw gawky like myself should have dared to enter the lists with a man of the world like their mould of fashion, D'Estomont! Methought the open countenance of Crescentia smiled upon me from among them, full of lofty compassion. But the white hands which endeavoured to lead Reginald Stormont into the group of my enemies were clearly those of Albertine!

At a distance, I heard louder shouts and more confused voices: those of Bob Barker, and Hetton, and Hampden,—who had harnessed Andrew Grove into a sledge and were driving him before them through the snow over which I had just found so much difficulty in making my way. Then came Charles Roxborough, just escaped from the pillory to which he had been sentenced by the jockey-club, and about to ride for the Derby in a black and all black cap and jacket, upon my Hungarian mastiff; while the Archdeacon cheered him on by reading the burial service.

Cold dews began to stream from my face amid the struggles of my spasmodic sleep. I could not stir, — I could not breathe; when lo! the loud acclamations and clapping of hands from the grand stand, as Roxborough brought his uncouth racer in gallant style to the post, dispelled the charm by which I was bound. I woke to find a dim grey light peeping in through the curtains, and anxious voices calling upon my name.

An express from Hawley Chase!;— "I had not a moment to lose if I wished to see Sir Robert alive!" A line signed "A. H." apprized me that he had been seized with a fit within an hour of my departure; that he was quite insensible; that his medical attendant from Wakefield declared his attack to be apoplectic; but that his faithful old body-servant, who was aware of his having been guilty of a little excess the preceding evening, and undergone a chilling revulsion of feeling shortly afterwards, persisted that his malady was gout thrown into the stomach.

To save time, Mrs. Hawley had been civil enough to send the carriage and horses ready for me to jump into; and I was at the dressing-room door of my poor old friend before the day had fully dawned.

He was still alive, but wholly unconscious. Albertine, seated

by the bed-side in her white dressing-gown, with the tears stealing silently down her pale cheeks, looked like the angel of mercy come to conduct his soul to bliss; while his attached household, huddled together in the corridor near his chamber door, awaited in sobbing consternation the announcement that all was at an end.

As I had refused, bluntly and ungraciously enough, the last request he ever addressed me, — that I would not depart from his threshold either in sorrow or in anger, but stay and calm down my irritation under his roof, if not for my own sake, for *his*, — I was earnestly in hopes of some parting token of recognition, — a kindly glance from his benignant eye, or a pressure from his wasted hand. But this comfort was denied me. I was aware of having contributed to the agitation of mind which had conveyed his death-blow; and not a sign or symptom could I obtain that my avowals of penitence reached his ears! His eyes were fixed and sightless,—his breathing grew more and more laborious. Though the only remaining evidence of life, one could have almost wished each gasp to be the last , so painful was the effort.

A moment afterwards, his grand-daughter fell on her knees by his bed-side, sobbing over his wasted hand; and I saw that death had claimed his own. I closed the glassy eyes, — I drew the sheet over his altered face, — I did all that a son of his loins could have done of respectful service; and then withdrew, to leave her to her grief.

"This is the most fortunate piece of business, Mr. Wrottesley!" exclaimed Gripham, when, after the lapse of an hour, he startled me from the reverie into which I had fallen in the great library chair. "Not five days, Sir, since my revered client executed his will; but for which, this fine property would have passed into the hands of comparative strangers!" —

"And so it will *now!*" said I, with saturnine doggedness.

"Pardon me, Sir, — pardon me, my dear Sir: — I cannot call the relative and heir of his valued friend, Francis Wrottesley, a stranger to one who had no immediate kindred surviving. — I was in his secret from the first, Sir. I knew when he sent you *to Paris last spring*, his motives for proposing the journey. He

has made you sole executor to his will, Sir, simply that no obstacle may be placed in the way of your immediate marriage with Mrs. Hawley; and I am convinced that could poor Sir Robert address you from the grave, it would be to implore you to lose no time, out of formal deference to his memory, in solemnizing a marriage that fulfils the dearest wishes of his heart."

"*Et tu*, — not *Brute*, — but brute!" thought I. "On every side some vexatious allusion!"

To avoid being maddened by a continuance of such preachments, I told him, in the fewest possible words, the exact state of the case: Mrs. Hawley was affianced to a happier man.

"God bless my soul, Sir! — God bless my soul and body!" ejaculated with great variety of intonation, was all that, for some minutes, poor Gripham could utter in reply. "Why, what will become of you, Sir? — What will ever become of you? — I'm told you're head over ears in debt! — I 'm told you 've eaten through half a dozen years' income! — I 'm told that specious rogue, young Roxborough, has devoured your substance like a locust!"

"No matter, Mr. Gripham!" was my haughty rejoinder. "From all responsibility touching my distracted affairs, the lapse of the next ten days will release you."

"Why that 's the very thing, Sir!" cried the attorney. "Nothing of the kind can be done. You were to have given a formal release to your guardian Sir Robert; and your guardian Sir Robert, having appointed you his sole executor, you will have to give a release to yourself. — And whereabouts am *I*, pray, who have been acting under his authority, — and though sure of *his* sanction and approbation, am by no means so sure of yours!"

"An honest man, Mr. Gripham," said I, "is sure of being equitably judged by an honest man. Meanwhile, I have but one request to make. I am in haste to quit the country. — Let the accounts be laid before me, as previously agreed upon, on Thursday the 18th."

"Quit the country? — Thursday the 18th!" repeated the bewildered lawyer. "Why to-morrow is the 10th, Sir! It will be impossible for Sir Robert Hawley's interment to take place, at soonest, before the 18th!"

"I think you told me," I rejoined stiffly, "that I was sole executor to his will?"

Gripham, (for Gripham and Co.,) bowed affirmatively.

"The funeral will take place, then, on the 17th," said I, in a resolved manner, "and you will be pleased to give orders accordingly."

Another bow, — but accompanied by something nearly resembling a groan.

"The 18th," I resumed, "must be devoted to our general settlement. You will find me awaiting you at ten o'clock, and at your service for the day. The 19th, I retain for my privacy: I have business of moment to set in order. The 20th, according to the wishes of poor Sir Robert, shall be given up to festivity and rejoicing throughout my estates. But on the 21st I shall again expect you, that I may deliver to you my written discharge; for on the 22nd I take my departure."

"But surely, Sir, — surely, my dear Mr. Wrottesley," cried Gripham, all but breathless with consternation at the Louis XIV. like determination of my tone, — "you would not wish to provoke the disapproval of the neighbourhood, — the county, — the borough, — (the borough we hoped you were about to represent, Sir!) by precipitancy in burying the dead, (a man so respected, Sir, as Sir Robert Hawley!) merely that no postponement may occur in the celebration of your coming of age?"

"It is only in accordance with Sir Robert's especial desire, Mr. Gripham, that the 20th of January is to be distinguished from any other day," said I. "I precipitate nothing. — I allow things to take their course; and henceforth trust to be as little an object of solicitude to what you term the neighbourhood, as the neighbourhood is to me."

"Do you mean that you are not going to stand for the borough? — That you are not about to reside at the Hall?" cried the attorney, with irrepressible eagerness.

"No time must be lost," said I, loftily evading the question, "in giving orders for the funeral of poor Sir Robert. — When the arrangements are completed, Mr. Gripham, I shall be *happy to hear* from you at Wrottesley Hall."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

With his spirit, sadly I survive,
To mock the expectation of the world,
To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out
Rotten opinion, which hath writ me down
After my seeming. SHAKSPEARE.

I REPROACHED myself afterwards, for having quitted the house without seeking an interview with Mrs. Hawley. A few kindly words spoken between us, at such a juncture, would have made us friends for ever. Whereas, intimidated by Gripham's representations of my ire, she sent for Lord and Lady John Jocelyn to advise and comfort her; and on the following morning I was waited upon by the former to suggest, in a civil but constrained manner, that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, Sir Robert Hawley's will should be opened and read without further delay, lest it might contain instructions concerning his place of interment.

I replied, haughtily I am certain, uncivilly I am afraid, that to have treated personally with a lady to whom I owed so much respect as Mrs. Hawley, would have insured compliance with her wishes. But that as messages sent through a third person bore always more or less a hostile character, I begged to refer his Lordship, as her delegate, to my own representative, Mr. Gripham.

It was accordingly arranged that the will should be read, neither at Wrottesley nor at the Chase, (where I had sworn never to set foot again,) but at the office of Messrs. Gripham, Klose, and Sneak, where it was deposited: Lord John Jocelyn representing on the occasion the interests of Sir Robert Hawley's grand-daughter-in-law.

Sorry enough was I, however, for having acquiesced in the scheme, when, as Gripham pompously recited the luckless document of his own drawing out, my ears were made to tingle with shame at repeated allusions to "the said Albertine Sophie Ghislaine Hawley's intended marriage with the said Henry Wrottesley Powerscourt Wrottesley," and to "the second, third, or any succeeding son, lawful issue of the said marriage." Con-

scious that Lord John was as well aware as myself and the attorneys to the estate, that my poor old guardian had deluded himself into building Castles in the Air quite as devoid of foundation as any of my creation, I could not doubt that, though he preserved a décent gravity of visage, he was enjoying a secret chuckle over my discomfiture.

At the close of the recital, I cleared my voice, (and would have given worlds to clear my vision, for on entering I had been ass enough to accept Gripham's offer of a glass of sherry after my cold ride, which, consisting of seven eights of alcohol to one part of wine, redoubled the nervous sensations I hoped it would overcome;) — and coldly declined accepting the executorship of the will, to which Mr. Hawley, as residuary legatee, might administer. "As I was about to quit the country," I said, "my officiating in the affair would be the source of great inconvenience and delay."

"Had not Sir Robert conceived himself to be delegating to my hands the care of *my own* interests," said I, "he would doubtless have selected a more experienced executor. But as on that point he was deceived, — whether wilfully deceived or not, I will not pause to inquire, — I leave to those who have secured the enjoyment of his property, the trouble of its protection."

"I could wish, Mr. Wrottesley," rejoined Lord John, who, though little more than a year older than myself in age, was twenty years my superior in deportment and self-possession, "I could wish for all our sakes that you would take time to reconsider this resolution. The first irritation of disappointment in the affections of such a woman as Mrs. Hawley, (not a word of the Hawley Chase estates, hang him! though I should haveliked to see even a son of the Duke of Sheffield, renounce them without a twinge!) naturally indisposes you to much exertion in her behalf."

"Your Lordship must pardon me," cried I, interrupting him. "For Mrs. Hawley, or in deference to the memory of my guardian, there is *no* trouble I should scruple to undertake. But to have to defer to the approval of a man like Mr. Stormont, with whom I am on terms of scarcely friendly acquaintance, is an *annoyance to* which I do not feel myself called upon to submit."

I was beginning to talk louder and thicker, as by degrees Gripham's sherry at thirty shillings per dozen, kindled a fire in my eyes and brain. Nor was the exacerbation of my feelings cooled down by the provoking *sang froid* of Lord John.

"I must again, and as a personal favour entreat you, Mr. Wrottesley," said he, "to reconsider the subject. The line of conduct you announce, appears to throw down the gauntlet to the Hawley family and interest —"

"Precisely. I consider myself wholly dissevered from both, and mean to mark it to the world."

"Which amounts to renouncing their support at the forthcoming election!" interrupted Lord John. "Aware as I am of my late respected friend Sir Robert's intention that you should represent his borough whenever his death vacated the seat, nothing would have induced me to exercise an adverse political influence over the nomination of the successor to his estates, so long as you were likely to remain in this country, and discharge the duties of one of its public servants. But I fairly warn you that I shall consider myself enfranchised in this respect by the line of conduct you announce."

I was now furious. Envy, hatred, malice, jealousy, disappointment and cheap sherry, held ascendancy over my soul and body. In reply to the manly warning of Lord John, I said a great deal I had better have left unsaid, and did a great deal I had better have left undone; so that we parted with sentiments of mutual displeasure and disgust. As to Gripham, he was struck dumb. He no longer recognized his gawky and supine client.

The day appointed for the funeral arrived; and to absent myself from the solemn ceremony, was a mark of disrespect to the memory of poor dear Sir Robert, of which fifty times my amount of personal vexation would not have made me guilty. I did not, however, enter the house; but stepped straight from my horse into a mourning coach; and as, in the absence of any acting executor, the marshalling of the mourners was left to the undertaker who presided over the arrangements, I had the fortune to find myself included in the same carriage with Lord Meadowley and Dr. Temple. The one was a stranger, — the other a worse

than stranger. But, overcome by emotion at beholding the coffin of my beloved old friend borne out of a house where I had received so much kindness, and which I had sworn never to enter again, there was no need for a better understanding between us. The bow of recognition which passed between me and the Rector having apprized Lord Meadowley that we were acquainted, he requested an introduction; and accosted me with a sincere tribute of praise to the memory of him we were following to the grave; but finding that I raised neither eye or voice in reply, he respected the perturbation of my feelings; and we arrived in silence within sound of the solemn bell which thrilled the very marrow in my bones as its hollow voice summoned another Christian to his rest.

I entered the church in the state of feeling in which every man ought to enter a church on such an occasion, — full of tender regrets and humble sorrow. But when I saw arrayed in scarfs and hat-bands in the aisle as the representatives of Mrs. Hawley's affliction, the Right Honourable Lord John Jocelyn and Reginald Stormont who was domiciled at the Elms as his guest, my heart hardened. Forgetting *whose* venerable remains were sheltered by the solemn pall I gazed on, I cursed the two chief mourners in my heart, as leagued enemies of my peace.

Not a syllable of the holy words which had formerly seemed so impressive from the lips of Dr. Temple, on the present occasion reached my ears. It was a relief when the service was over, — a still greater when I found that the Rector intended to stay and preside over the closing of the vault; — for, Lord Meadowley was too completely a stranger, for *his* presence to be a restraint.

I trust you will agree with me, sapient reader, that there is a species of man in England to whom every interest in life is subsidiary to that of political jobbing. Lord Meadowley, for instance, though conscientious and gentlemanly, was too completely a partyman to pass over so good an occasion for ascertaining whether strength would be added or lost to his cause, by the death of Sir Robert. After adverting with regret to the habitual ill health which had prevented the Whigs from deriving all the *good they had a* right to expect from the services of my late

guardian, he expressed a hope that one so young and active as myself, might be disposed to make amends for the past.

"Sir Robert has bequeathed his property I find, to his grandson's handsome widow," observed his Lordship: "probably as an act of expiation. Our late friend was one of the vindictive many who, when those belonging to them choose to be happy in their own way spare no pains to make them miserable, and I can understand the feeling which, in his last moments, prompted Sir Robert to make atonement to the sole survivor of his banished son. Mrs. Hawley it is true will take the estate with her into another family; but she will give him heirs more likely to do credit to his name (which her second son, it seems, is to assume,) than the distant kinsman whose opinions, religious and political, were so offensive to the poor old gentleman."

He paused; and my eyes being still fixed on the cheerless landscape, he had a right to suppose that I was listening.

"From my Lord John Jocelyn's account," continued he, somewhat superciliously, "the young widow's choice met with Sir Robert's perfect approbation. The happy man officiated to-day as one of the chief mourners, — a gentlemanly-looking person, and said to belong to one of our ancient Norman families."

"Nephew and heir to Sir Thomas Stormont, of Crowsden Grange," said I, with pragmatical exactness, by way of proving my attention.

"In that case," rejoined Lord Meadowley, "I congratulate Mrs. Hawley on becoming the wife of one whose position proves him to be above making an interested marriage."

Not having forgotten Reginald Stormont's attentions to my sister when he believed her to be a co-heiress, to Mélanie de Bonval, when she was the highest prize in the wheel — and to Albertine, from the moment he knew that Sir Robert's splendid fortune was to be added to the inheritance of Monsieur Des Auliers, any very lively demonstration of assent was impossible.

"But though I rejoice to find we are about to have a young man of such excellent descent and connections established at the Chase," he continued, "I see no reason why Sir Robert's interest and influence should not fructify the ground he had selected for

their exercise. We all know, Mr. Wrottesley, that it was his wish you should succeed him in parliament; and both as his friend and the friend of your late revered relative, Francis Wrottesley, it would give me pleasure, Sir, *real* pleasure, — to propose you on the hustings of***."

I thanked him as formally as his pomposity demanded: but replied in terms too decided to be mistaken that I had no desire to enter upon public life.

"Yet Sir Robert himself assured me," he exclaimed, "that you entertained the highest political ambitions: that you looked forward to becoming a leading member of our party!"

"Those who are prone to looking forward my Lord," said I, "sometimes exhaust their energies by mere force of anticipation. Now that the moment for launching myself is arrived I prefer an easier and happier life on shore."

Let me spare my readers his Lordship's dignified remonstrances and my own petulant rejoinders! Suffice it I left him, his party and the borough, to the hands of Stormont and Lord John: — the former being a quasi Tory, the later a schismatic whig. I spare them also the bitter ruminations which occupied the intermediate day I had insisted upon for my private leisure. Next morning came Gripham and his clerk, bringing accounts and files of figures enough to cover an acre of land; yet the whole of which I went through, with a patience and method that would have rejoiced the heart of my old writing master at Eagle House. My zeal enabled me to detect errors to the amount of a few paltry hundred pounds, in an account of tens of tens of thousands. But there was no error to be detected in one item which sorely moved my spleen: *viz.* a sum due to the firm of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak and Klose for professional service during the last three years, stamps, fees and disbursements, to the amount of £7,347 4*s* 8½*d*.

After carefully auditing the accounts, an operation of many hours' duration, I requested the balance sheet might be left with me, as well as a copy of the release which, on the day succeeding my majority, that is, the day after the morrow, I was to sign; and politely bowed out the aggressors. Time enough to inform them, when this important document was legalized, that I de-

manded three months for the disbursement of the sum demanded; in the course of which, I intended clearing off every guinea of my liabilities by mortgages or judicious sales, under the advice of new men of business and an auditor of my own selection.

It was my intention to propose to Andrew Grove, who at my last visit to town I had ascertained to be residing in Lambeth as junior partner in an engineering firm of some celebrity, to undertake the management of my property, (the chief value of which consisted in mines which had been shamefully neglected,) with a salary of a thousand per annum, and a handsome house on the estate; and prospered by so intelligent a viceroy, I indulged vague expectations of becoming as rich as Crœsus.

The reader, having no great grounds for faith in my veracity, will perhaps discredit me when I swear that, in the confusion of mind arising from the succession of emotions to which I had been exposed, my invitation to my young friends in London to assist in the general uproar which was to certify to the county that Wrottesley Wrottesley was his own master, had wholly escaped my memory. They did not however the less make their appearance. The mail, the heavy coach, and a succession of post-chaises, brought down a heterogeneous throng, who looked as if they had fallen together from the skies, like the walking gentlemen engaged to fill the stage in a pantomime.

After the momentary startle of their arrival, I was rather glad of than sorry for the interruption. Any thing to escape from myself! — Any thing to escape from the past! — Surrounded by my little train of courtiers, my fallen countenance might escape the notice of the vulgar. As to preparation for their reception, the Hall resembled just then a first rate inn. Willis of the Thatched House, abetted by the cooks of the Black Swan at York, had undertaken the feasting department; the plate-closets and cellars had been opened in my presence by Gripham, Klose, and Sneak; and since the days of the wedding banquet of Ricquet with the Tuft, never had there been such cracking of marrow-bones or swearing of cooks. While feeling somewhat like a guest in my own house, I had no difficulty in making my visitors thoroughly at home. My mourning suit afforded sufficient excuse

for my want of spirits; but from the moment the champagne began to circulate, no further excuse was wanting. In the desperation of my forced mirth, I jested, — laughed, — drank, — sang, — raved. It is only justice to the party to declare, that not a soul among us went sober to bed.

A mighty pleasant thing after such an orgie, to be roused up at daybreak by volleys of musketry and a field piece or two, discharged to tell you that the day of your twenty-first birthday is dawning; or, after swearing your fill and turning round upon your pillow, to be prevented resuming your rest by the din and discordance of a village band — bassoon and serpents included. The Wrottesley peasantry exhibited their affection for me scraping and bellowing "God save the King," "Rule Britannia," and "Hearts of Oak," till I could have found it in my heart to commit tenanticide, with full security that the circumstances were extenuating.

As we had sat up singing and drinking in a style that the Honourable Blank Blank would not have disavowed, till near daylight, it was rather early for more crotchets and quavers! But sleep being out of the question and soda and seltzer-water much in request, we contrived to have breakfasted by twelve o'clock, so as to welcome the mounted deputation of my tenantry of a higher class; who came with silken banners bearing appropriate devices, to bid me, like an Eastern Sultan, "Live for ever." And after more speechifying than I could listen to with patience, we proceeded together to visit the roasting and distribution of the ox, — one of the nastiest exhibitions, by the way, I ever witnessed.

In spite of the severity of the weather, games and races for the villagers followed; and a match was skated upon the lake, which would have done honour to Haarlem or Amsterdam. It was not alone my own tenants who were entertained. Country people from far and near came flocking into the Park; — from Roxborough, — from (Heaven forgive them) Hawley Chase. — It was a long time since any thing like a public festival had occurred in the neighbourhood; and they were determined that the

echoes of Wrottesley Hall, so long dormant, should be roused up right royally at last.

The more uproar, — the more hurraing, — the more eating and drinking, — the better I was pleased. The tumult could not be too great. I was only sorry that it was not extended so as to shake the eaves of Hawley Chase; where, I doubted not that Albertine and her affianced lover were seated together; triumphing in the fruition of their nefarious schemes. And though the cause of my reckless spirits was unsuspected, I was amply seconded by my visitors; — choice spirits, well qualified to promote joviality and mirth. When I opened the ball with one of my tenants' daughters, in the great hall gorgeously decorated for the occasion with evergreens and banners, they cheerfully followed my example; after which fatiguing operation, we retired to the dining-room, and renewed, on a more refined scale, the pleasures over which we had been presiding since noon.

Had a single moment been allowed me for reflection, what bat-like thoughts would have flitted through the twilight of my mind! — Of those most endeared to me since the first ill-omened day of my setting foot in Wrottesley Hall, the kindest, the fairest, and the most faithful had sunk into the grave; — if not laid there by my hand, at least hastened by my ministry. And now they were gone, whom was I to cling to, in their stead? What friends had I cultivated, — what kinsfolk had I conciliated, — what dependants had I attached, — what credit had I won? Who was there to care whether I were cut off by the will of Sir Robert Hawley, or deplore my self-sacrifice in renouncing all further connection with the best interests of my native land? Not one, — no, *not one!* — Dr. Temple regarded me indeed with a pitying eye; and my mother and sisters were proud of me as of some fine state garment, which it gratified them to think of as laid by in a chest, to be drawn forth on high-days and holidays. But there existed none to whose happiness it sufficed to hold my hand in theirs; or who, on hearing that disaster had befallen me, would turn aside their heads and weep! —

No matter! — A princely board, surrounded by applauding parasites, was spread before me. Wine, rendered nectar by

time, was sparkling like a topaz or gleaming like a ruby in every glass. A sunlike flood of light irradiated a table groaning under the ancient family plate of the Wrottesleys, till it reminded one of the pictured gorgeousness of Belshazzar's feast.

"Of all this," thought my vindictive soul, which the unaccustomed fumes of Amontillado and Val de Penas, were beginning to inflate even to bursting, — "of all this, neither the insolence of my aristocratic neighbours, nor the malice of an artful woman, can deprive me. Under this roof, and master of all that gilds and brightens the plodding ways of life, I am still entitled to render back scorn for scorn. Why should I quit the kingdom, when *here* I command new means, — unheard-of means, — of human enjoyment? — No, no — I will lead the life of a Satrap. — My bowl shall be crowned with flowers, and soft music aid the process of digestion, in place of the heavy political discussions which appropriately accompany the unctuous turtle and reeking haunches of what England calls society. If even these refined enjoyments fail to stimulate the flagging blood in my veins, to new pleasures shall succeed new illusions. The brilliancy of Wrottesley Hall need not blind me to the still brighter effulgence of my Castles in the Air."

With what preposterous aspirings wine and the excitement of a moment unique in a man's life, might have inspired me, it were vain to guess. Just as the dessert was placed on table, a whisper in my ear from Willis, requesting my immediate attention to a note which he placed in my hand, put a sudden close to my vagaries; and the two obsequious *bon-vivants* by whom my chair was supported, conceiving perhaps that a *billet* forced upon my notice at such a moment could only be a *billet-doux*, discreetly turned to gossip with their neighbours, leaving me to the undisturbed perusal of my dispatch.

A chilling presentiment convinced *me*, on the contrary, that it contained disagreeable intelligence; and being resolved that not a cloud should obscure the factitious light in which I was luxuriating, I filled a goblet of claret to the brim, and was about to make an end of the note according to the song, "*drowning it in* the bowl," when the sight of the handwriting

of the good Archdeacon arrested my hand; — and though, on tearing it open and finding it dated from "Wrottesley Parsonage," I felt half inclined to renew my project of immersion, the initials R. R. at the foot of the page again bespoke my respect.

"I am too much vexed by all I have been hearing about you lately to come near you," was the abrupt apostrophe of my old friend. — "But I have just received intelligence from town which it is indispensable you should learn. I have it from my poor cousin Gratian, (who is under engagements to his worthless son to hold no communication with yourself,) that a writ will be obtained against you at the suit of a blackguard moneylender, named Shadrach, or so commonly called; and that an execution will be put into your house in course of the week, by another rascal of the name of Snettering. Be on your guard, Harry; for I have reason to know that among the crowd of vagabonds who are this night making a bear garden of the old Hall (before your excellent friend Sir Robert is cold in his grave!) *are two sheriff's officers!*

"Your friend,

"R. R."

The shock sobered me, but it did not make me wiser. Instead of waiting for the proposal of my health, which, since I was in the humour for speechifying, would have afforded me some pretext for making an ass of myself, I rose, amid the wonderment of some and the vehement acclamations of the rest, and proclaimed the exact state of the case. "Sheriff's officers were lying in ambush in my house to serve a writ obtained at the suit of a rogue known by name to them all, and by persecution, perhaps, to more than one, — Shadrach the money lender."

A groan of execration saluted the name. — For what dissolute young fellow between twenty and twenty-five, but shudders at mere mention of a Jew, — the unclean thing entailed as a penalty upon his vices! —

Encouraged by this general sympathy and fevered by rage and wine, I proceeded to inform them that of the sum claimed by Shadrach, I had been defrauded by the cunning of an individual holding the highest place among gentlemen, but better entitled

to the highest among rascals; who, after cheating his old father, his innocent sisters, and in the present instance, his trusting friend, was the hand-in-hand companion of princes, and favoured guest of half the lords in the land; — slippery on the turf, — slippery at the gaming-table, — slippery wherever the ring of coin was audible, or the letters I. O. U. held tantamount to L. S. D.; but steady as a rock where polished impudence passed current under the name of fashion: — Charles Roxborough — no longer of Roxborough Elms. —

As scarcely one among the coarse *roués* I was addressing but had been made to smart, at one moment or other, under the insolence of the man I accused, or had suffered still more positively from the result of his crooked policy on the turf, — (where, for the honour of British sport and integrity, policy should never be allowed to find footing,) — my words were caught up with enthusiasm. The responsibility of the denunciation lying with myself, all were eager to declare their long-standing mistrust of a man who had secured for himself a comfortable income out of his gains, by the purchase of an annuity; — leaving his losses to be made up at the cost of his family and friends.

After venting their displeasure on the name of the originator of my tribulations, my friend Hetton — a bolder braggart than the rest — rose, as well as holding by the back of his chair enabled him to perform the feat, and proposed, as distinctly as Champagne and Burgundy admitted of his making the proposal, that, after another half-dozen bottles, we should commence a search after the enemy.

"Wrottesley has given us an account," said he, "of his bear-hunting, and boar-hunting, and wolf-hunting, and — and all sorts of hunting. But he can afford us better sport on his own premises than all these confounded battues put together. I've a notion bailiff-hunting must beat badger-hunting to shivers!"

"Bravo, bravo! — A bailiff-hunt, a bailiff-hunt!" shouted the rest. — And before I could modify their drunken ardour, each seized a sconce from the candelabra ornamenting the table; *and away* they went, like mad, — tumbling one over the other,

— rushing from room to room through the apartments, and ascending the great staircase in lawless confusion; some with the notion of being in at the death of a bailiff; others, still further gone in drunkenness, without any other notion or capability than that of adding to the uproar.

"For the Almighty's sake, Mr. Wrottesley, Sir, put an end to this!" — cried the breathless Gripham, who, at the first outbreak had been hastily fetched to the scene of confusion by the mild and discreet Willis; — "consider, Sir, the impression such conduct will make in the county!" —

I devoted the county to a fate, which, considering its size and population, was somewhat alarming. — But what was the county to *me?*

"Your tenantry, then, Sir; to whom you owe an example; — respectable men, who have trusted their families under your roof, and whom you are about to insult and exasperate to gratify the antics of a drunken rabble."

I was taking serious thought about flinging my officious monitor down stairs; when the mad cries of my companions, who, having reached the corridor above, were calling upon me to follow them and not leave a door unbroken till we unearthed the skulking myrmidons of the villain Shadrach, — afforded some colouring to his exclamation of — "They are blind drunk, Sir! — They are no longer responsible beings. — If once they enter the bed-rooms, they will burn down the house!" —

A gleam of reason yet remained to me. — "Run round by the back staircase, then, Gripham," said I, "and close the iron door which shuts off the eastern wing. We must prevent their dispersing over the house, or molesting the tenants in the hall."

And while he scuffled off to execute my orders, I hastened to join the party in the corridor above; — no easy task, by the way, for of the eighteen or twenty engaged in the pursuit, ten, at least, were scattered among the chambers, where, having stumbled in the dark, they lay shouting for help. But after gathering them together, I thought fit to announce that the enemy was captured and safely lodged under bolt and bar in my justice-room; so that we were at leisure to repair to the billiard-

room which was lighted up for our use, with card-tables set in the adjoining saloon.

As they were in the mood to be diverted from whatever pursuit they were following on the temptation of a new object, my proposal was greeted with loud applause. "To the billiard-room, — to the billiard-room!" was the general cry. But as two of the party, (one of the Whichcotes and a young man named Halliwell, the only son of one of my mother's opulent Hertfordshire neighbours,) were voted incapable of joining us, we placed the former on his bed, and the latter on a sofa in the adjoining dressing-room to sleep off their wine, and grow sober at leisure. Lest they should stumble down stairs after us, however, and get into mischief, I turned the key of the door upon them ere I followed my rabble rout.

A pool at billiards, played as I have never seen billiards played except at Cambridge, or after such a bout as we had been indulging in, soon absorbed our attention: a few of the party breaking off into the adjoining saloon for a game at Blind hookey, or Cockamaroo. After the storm, a lull was not unacceptable. Having shouted ourselves hoarse, and raved ourselves out of breath, we were disposed to commit what further follies remained for us to do with a drunken stolidity worthy the gravity of a Spanish Hidalgo.

For more than half an hour, nothing was audible but the click of the billiard-balls, and an occasional ejaculation of warning when some fellow, more drunk than the rest, overbalanced himself on his chair. When lo! an alarming sound, accompanied by sudden cries and hurrying footsteps! — The alarum of the turret-clock was ringing, accompanied by the awe-striking monosyllable of "FIRE!"

I rushed to the window, — flung aside the heavy curtains, — threw up the ponderous sash. A smell of burning instantly pervaded the room. And no wonder. Groups of bare-headed people escaped from the ball-room who crowded the lawn, shrieking, vociferating, and intent only on escape, were thrown *into frightful* relief upon the snow that covered the ground, by

the reflection of an unnatural light apparently proceeding from the attics, which grew redder and redder every moment.

On leaning out, and turning my face anxiously upwards, I perceived a burst of flame from two windows on the bed-room story; which, in the consternation of the moment, appeared to lie in the direction of those belonging to young Whichcote's bed-chamber! —

And all the time, the alarum bell continued to ring out with terrible earnestness; while hundreds and hundreds of voices took up the fearful cry of "FIRE!" —

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived,
And soon to be supplanted. COWPER.

What cometh? Behold! without menace or call
Who writes with the lightning's bright hand on the wall?
What pierceth the host like the point of a dart,
What drives the bold blood from his cheek to his heart? —

MY first impulse was to rush to the scene of danger. I was probably the only person cognizant of those two wretched victims being locked into their room. On the threshold of the billiard-room, I met Gripham, ghastly with affright; — who detained me to say he had despatched expresses to Wakefield, the Elms, the Chase, for engines and succour. In the impression that male-factors had got into the house under cover of the rejoicings, and set fire to it for purposes of plunder, he kept calling upon all and sundry to rescue the family plate, and save the fine old pictures. But when he found me tearing away towards the upper story which was known to be in flames, he attached himself with such vehemence to my person, that it was with the loss of one of my skirts I escaped from his grasp, and hurried up the second flight of stairs, now nearly impassable from smoke.

To enable me to reach the fatal spot, I stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth. Another moment and I flung open the door of Whichcote's room, — prepared to be overcome by an outburst of flame. But no! a single glance convinced me

It was thanks to their judicious authority that any thing, — little enough, however, — was preserved out of the wreck! The yeomanry-cavalry, when at last they made their appearance for the purpose of keeping order, added materially to the confusion of a scene in which none but experienced firemen, nerved into presence of mind by force of habit, ever render efficient assistance. After cutting pictures from their frames and flinging marble chimney-pieces out of window for their preservation, they ended by an act of dauntless bravery which was very near costing me my life; by penetrating into the interior of the house when the conflagration was at its hottest, for the rescue of three chests of family plate, for the saving of which a reward was most indiscreetly offered by Gripham.

Two of these heavy chests were brought out and deposited on the lawn, amidst the cheering of such as judged it pleasanter to play the part of spectators. But on noticing the scorched and singed state of the poor fellows who for a bribe of twenty pounds had been tempted to risk their lives, I inquired anxiously concerning the bearers of the third chest, who, having entered the house with them, ought to have been close upon their heels.

But the third chest, it appeared, was not forthcoming at the place pointed out by Gripham; and the men had been mad enough to venture further in search of it, — in a strange place, where the windings of the passages were hard to make out, even by those whose senses were collected.

"They will lose themselves to a certainty!" cried I. — "What madness to attempt it!"

"A twenty pun' note, Squoire, be a blessed matter to coom to a mon like Hodge Watson, wi' noine children looking to him for bread!" cried one of their comrades. But at the announcement of the danger of a father of nine children, I was off like a shot! All the caskets of diamonds in the United Kingdom would not have tempted me again into the furnace. — But the idea of two poor fellows losing their lives to save my worthless epergnes and soup-tureens, when a word shouted to them might save them, urged me on. The basement story traversed by freer currents of *air than* the floors above, was of course easier to penetrate; and

with my coat flung over my head, I even ventured to rush into the great hall, where the festive lights were still burning quietly on the walls, though the flames had reached the gallery above and cast every moment burning fragments on the highly dry-rubbed floor, converted into the semblance of burning naphtha by the reflection.

All was glare, suffocation, and confusion. The intense heat seemed to dry up my blood and penetrate my very brain. I almost forgot the purpose that brought me thither. But again, as before, I heard my name lustily called upon; and hastily retraced my steps and reached the outer air, at the very moment the roof of the hall fell in, involving every thing in ruin.

By this sudden compression of the burning mass, the flames and smoke were probably forced into the adjoing passages; for I had a hard matter to struggle forth into the air; and in my transit received so severe a cut on the temple, either from rushing against some angle, or from a falling beam, that my clothes were saturated with blood.

All that followed I leave to the imagination of the reader; for my own senses wholly deserted me. I have a vague recollection of being carried along through the cold air in a recumbent position, and of the friendly voice of the Archdeacon exhorting me to fortitude; but nothing further. More than four-and-twenty hours elapsed before I became conscious of being in a strange bed, in a state of great bodily suffering; many days, before I could be apprized that I had been in imminent peril of my life, and that I was an inmate of Wrottesley Rectory.

The Hall, — (they told it me gradually, and as if preparing me for the death of a relation!) — the Hall was a heap of ruins; of which the two leading County Insurance Companies were in possession. But no lives had been lost. Several persons had suffered severely. One of the yeomanry privates had been in still greater agony and danger than myself. But there was no loss of life upon my conscience. My guests had hurried back to town. My family, duly communicated with by Dr. Temple, were prevented from attending upon me only by knowing me to be a guest in a house where their arrival would be a great inconvenience.

Mrs. Hawley, the John Jocelyns, every neighbour of mark or consideration had been unwearied in inquiries after my improvement; and I perceived with gratification by the affectionate tone in which all this was announced to me by the Archdeacon, and confirmed by the soberer testimony of Doctor Temple, that their kindness towards me arose less from compassion towards the great calamity which had befallen me, than from the manner in which they had seen me exert myself under its pressure.

There was one person who appeared nearly as much to be pitied as myself. — Gripham, who, at my desire, had left in the audit-room exclusively devoted to his use, and of which the key was in his custody, all the papers and documents verifying the accounts, in virtue of which I was to furnish him with a release on the morrow, had no longer so much as the tinder of a voucher to make out his claim! — For considerable payments, it would of course be easy to procure new receipts. But for thousands of pounds, this would be impossible; and the poor wretch felt himself completely at my mercy.

From my careless mode of life, he naturally concluded I had taken little heed of the debtor and creditor account between us. But he was mistaken. The balance against me was so much less than I expected, — thanks to the fluctuating state of the mine-market, and a variety of securities belonging to my late revered relative which my boyish calculations had never yet added to the amount of my personalty, — that the gross sums were indelibly impressed on my memory. As soon, therefore, as I could speak collectedly, I requested Dr. Temple to instruct him to draw out a second release; by which, holding myself accountable for the balance in question, I was ready to sign a general discharge.

By the air of satisfaction with which the commission was accepted by the Doctor, and the grateful thanks despatched to me by Gripham, (who from injuries received at the fire was still too ill to leave his room) I clearly perceived that the tutorage of Charles Roxborough was supposed to have rendered me unworthy the trust and fellowship of honest men.

By degrees, I was apprized that a writ had been served on my *person* which would have lodged me in York Castle, had not the

Archdeacon and the Doctor put in bail; and Charles Roxborough's sharp-shooting attorney had been down to insist upon a personal interview, which nothing but a certificate of my danger from my medical attendants prevented his obtaining by force.

I was as yet scarcely strong enough to contend with these contrarieties; still less, to hear with patience the intelligence communicated by the Archdeacon that the new Rector of Rainham, being on a visit to his friend Lord John Jocelyn at the moment I signified my refusal to replace Sir Robert Hawley in Parliament, had suggested for the vacant seat his elder brother; who, having lately succeeded to the Barming estate, was desirous of figuring as an M.P. Thanks to the difficulty of providing a satisfactory candidate at a moment's notice, the proposition was accepted; and to the indignation of the liberal inhabitants of a borough at that time as mere a portion of the Hawley property as the four walls of the Chase, the new member was proposed by Courtfield of Courtfield, seconded by Lord John Jocelyn, and of course returned without opposition. — Stormont had previously declined the seat; unwilling to shackle his roving propensities by the responsibilities of parliamentary life. But Reginald the traveller would have been almost more unacceptable to me, than Whichcote the fox-hunter!

"Conceive, my dear Harry, poor Sir Robert's sensations, could he have anticipated a rank Tory occupying his place!" cried the Archdeacon, when we talked it over. "Could I have supposed that little baggage likely to carry the Hawley property into the enemy's camp, hang me if I 'd ha' been at the trouble of conveying her and her rattle-traps last year across the channel!"

Though careful to conceal my chagrin, I was not just then capable of *very* artful dissembling.—My constitution had received a shock, from which even youth and its own strength could scarcely guarantee recovery. Already, within twelve months' space, nature had twice made an effort to rescue me from the jaws of death; and in the present and third case, the physician shook his head. Exposure to the bitter night air, after violent exertion, without hat or coat, had produced inflammation of the lungs, which was feared to have left the seeds of pulmonary consumption.

They did not of course tell me this; but I read in the gentleness of their mode of addressing me, and their suggestions for my future government, that such was my doom.—When, in reply to the Archdeacon's jeremiad concerning the political and other changes in the society of the neighbourhood, I expressed my indifference, seeing that "now the family seat of the Wrottesleys was destroyed, I had no longer a tie to the soil, and that the estate would be shortly in the market,"—he entreated me "to take no rash measures,—to wait the issue of my illness,—life itself being short." And as there were tears in his eyes, caused either by apprehension of my danger, or regret that another great Yorkshire property should pass out of the line of its ancient inheritors, I began to agree with *him* that, if my days were numbered, the settlement of my affairs might just as well be left to Dora and Emily and their liege lords, as harass my remnant of existence.

Of Dr. Temple if I hesitate to speak, it is not from mean disinclination to render justice to a man I had dared to consider my enemy; but from scarcely knowing in what terms to describe the manly candour with which he met half-way the difficulties of our relative position.

"I trust we are now friends for life, my dear Mr. Wrottesley," said he, with some emotion but no embarrassment, the first day I was well enough for desultory conversation. "Hitherto, we have misunderstood each other; and both, I fear, have accusations to lay to their conscience. But as so much your elder, I am the most to blame. At my age, there was no excuse for the false delicacy, or rather the unchristian-like pride, which forbad my urging my brother's claims upon you in terms which I am now convinced would have prevailed. To this mistrust of *you* and care of my own consequence, the life of one excellent creature and happiness of another, have been cruelly sacrificed; and in sackcloth and ashes do I repent having been silenced by a crisis in which the cobweb barriers of conventional form should have been broken through without scruple."

I replied by fervently clasping his hand.

"I know you better now," said he, in a tremulous voice.

"You have taught me to know you better; and I rejoice that a friend has re-entered my dwelling, and a parishioner my flock."

Scarcely less affecting was my interview with poor old Gripham, — hitherto so contemned by my boyish misapprehension. Recent events appeared to have added ten years to his age. — His hair was nearly white, — his eyes were hollow, — his voice broken. I verily believe, that the destruction of the old seat with which his fortunes had been connected from the day of his birth, weighed far more on his mind than on mine! — I had previously learned from the Archdeacon that the charge for auditing my accounts during my minority, which I had fancied so exorbitant, amounted only to the per centage usually exacted; and when I found that, during the conflagration, the poor man had issued orders for saving my effects instead of the documents which he believed to be essential to his reimbursement of sums constituting his whole fortune and that of his children, — for the first time during our intercourse I shook him cordially by the hand. I felt that my distrust had scarcely merited such devoted fidelity.

As soon as I was strong enough to take the air, he wanted me to accompany him to visit the ruins. — But I declined; on pretence that the sight would be painful; but in reality, from knowing that if I once ventured out in the carriage, I should have no further pretext for postponing a return of the visits of inquiry of Stormont and Lord John Jocelyn. — It was a pleasanter task to issue orders for rewards to be presented to the numerous parties who had rendered notable service at the fire; — to the poor, in money, — to the farmers, in pieces of plate.

The insurance offices, though eager to prove that the catastrophe originated in the wanton disorder of myself and my guests, who were proved to have paraded the bed-rooms in a state of mad intoxication with lights brandished in their hands, — were made accountable for a sum of 22,000*l.*; — testimony being brought that the fire originated in the over-heated chimney of a chamber some distance beyond the iron door dividing the wing from the main body of the house, which, by a fortunate coincidence I had caused to be closed.

"This sum, Sir, will go half way towards constructing a new

mansion!" said Gripham, when he brought me tidings that all opposition to my claim was withdrawn on the part of the Phœnix and Pelican.

"Rather towards the liquidation of my debts, Gripham!" said I, in a despondng tone. — "To-morrow, I leave my kind friends in Yorkshire, — probably never to return."

The same excellent physician who had insisted on a change of climate the preceding spring, having informed me that, in the present instance, my sole chance of recovery lay in a southern atmosphere, I had made arrangements for starting for Nice. — But (will the reader believe in so sudden a modification of my love of independence, and dread of family interference?) I had of my own accord besought the company on my journey of my mother and Dora! — They were on the point of breaking up their establishment at Hentsfield. The former, like myself, was an invalid; the latter, like myself, a trifle out of conceit with the worldly and heartless system of our early life; and well disposed to quit the country where the marriage of her recusant knight, Reginald Stormont, was creating some sensation. — I felt that we were entitled to contribute to our mutual consolation. — *Stessa sangue — stessa sorte!* — If fated to die before the flowers of my precocious spring gave place to a more fruitful germ, better that kindred hearts and the accents of my native language should cheer my parting hour.

It was on the threshold of Wrottesley Church, I took leave of Dr. Temple. I had walked there, with my travelling-carriage waiting at the door, for a last look at the stone which covered the remains of her to whose early death I had so cruelly contributed.

"I am not afraid to contemplate it *now*," said I, raising my eyes to the tablet, while my hand was pressed in that of the man who had consecrated her grave; "for I feel less unworthy to meet her where we shall shortly be united — less unworthy of the kindness you have lavished on me and mine."

Nor was it till many, many miles divided me from that sacred spot, I succeeded in subduing a burst of emotion that seemed to rend my heart asunder, as I went forth into exile, — broken in health, fortune, and reputation, — after witnessing the utter *downfal of my* successive Castles in the Air. —

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ne plus penser, ne plus aimer, ne plus haïr,
Si dans un coin du cœur il éclot un désir,
Lui couper sans pitié ses ailes de colombe, —
Etre comme est un mort, étendu sous la tombe,
Dans l'immobilité savourer lentement
Comme un philtre endormeur, l'anéantissement:
Voilà quel est mon vœu, tant j'ai de lassitude
D'avoir voulu gravir cette côte âpre et rude,
Brocken mystérieux, où des sommets nouveaux
Surgissent tout à coup sur de nouveaux plateaux,
Et qui ne laisse voir de ses plus hautes cimes,
Que l'esprit du vertige errant sur les abimes. GAUTIER.

How gentle is the sward! — Tread soft! — Perhaps
A blue-eyed creature whom the spring forgot
To quicken, lies below. Perhaps she was
Too frail to unfold her bloom, — so died i' the bud.
PROCTOR.

BEAR witness for me, reader, that in my more prosperous days, I never attempted to enlist your sympathy in favour of the glories of Wrottesley Hall. I might have dazzled you by a catalogue of my pictures and statues, or captivated your fancy by a description of the fêtes given under the old roof when it was the domicile of the too famous Wharton. But I spared your patience; and have consequently the better right to take you by the hand, and lead you down the gently sloping lawn of my new home at Villa Verde; an overgrown hedge of rosemary and tamarisk alone interposing between my domain and the Mediterranean shore.

In this tranquil retreat, all was holiness and peace. I was fortunate in finding a residence where separate pavilions, (neither of them much larger than Hentsfield, though dignified by their Italian elevation) were united by what was called a park; consisting of a beautiful flower-garden and shrubbery *à l'Anglaise*, with some noble avenues of Spanish chestnuts and cork-trees whose growth afforded little indication of our vicinity to the sea.

As no one has occasion to address a letter to my southern retreat, no need set down its exact whereabout! Whether at Nice, Hyères, Cannes, or elsewhere, English carpers familiar with those localities, would be sure to attack my veracity: — each invalidating some trait of my partial portrait by declaring that

neither chestnut, nor cork-tree, nor cactus nor palm, nor even greensward, ever flourished near the spot depicted.

Be content, therefore, dear reader, — or rather, like poor Dora, be *overjoyed* at finding the soft gales of an Eden-like atmosphere gradually restore vigour to my exhausted frame. Within a few months, I began to exist without the dread that every passing day might be my last: within twelve, to breathe nearly as freely as other people. Still, my health was sufficiently precarious to be an object of absorbing interest to my poor mother; who seemed to feel as if her prodigal son were restored to her by the reverses which, by bringing him to the brink of the grave, had brought him also to a sense of what was due to those who had kept watch over his cradle. Even with myself, the fluctuations of the breath of life and the changes of weather by which they were influenced, remained a leading care. Infirmities of body obtained complete ascendancy over my equally infirm mind! —

My new home was too shadily situated to require immigration during the summer heats which too often drive the northern native into Switzerland; and on the approach of winter, when the inhabitants of the neighbouring *bastides* repaired to the nearest city for the enjoyment of those carnival pleasures with which the mercurial blood of foreign countries is unable to dispense, our English nature saw nothing like self-denial in remaining in our beautiful solitude to welcome Emily, and her husband, and the little Wrottesley that now completed her happiness.

When the beautiful Princesse de Joinville, reared in a tropical climate, first witnessed the fall of the leaf in the neighbourhood of Paris, she is said to have melted into tears, in the idea that the end of all things was at hand! By a similar association of ideas, my mother and sisters, on passing a winter among verdure and flowers, seemed to fancy they had attained supreme bliss. Neither snow nor frost, nor even chill, was apparent at Villa Verde. The same beneficent gifts of the earth, — the same loveliness of creation, prevailed!

The superiority attained in the art of horticulture in England, *Holland, and* Flanders, has often been said to originate in defects

of climate. To produce even a faint rivalship with the aspect of tropical climates, excessive art being indispensable. But this I know, that the exercise of similar art in a southern land is as delightful as to train a docile and well-conditioned child, after hammering the brains of a dunce; and when I discovered all that might be done with a little care, a little cost, and a great deal of interest in their exercise, towards surprising new secrets out of the unbounded treasury of nature, I addressed myself to the task of garden-making with as much enthusiasm as I had ever done to the construction of Castles in the Air. It was still my delight to —

> create, and in creating live
> A being more intense.

My family, long since convinced of the fruitlessness of opposing my wishes, witnessed with silent regret my purchase of a residence so far from my native country, as to induce a fear that I might verify my announcement, and return to Wrottesley no more. But I had only to allude to the necessity imposed upon me by an infirm constitution of seeking a *bel respiro* nearer the sun, to enlist my anxious mother on my side.

I was even proof against the raillery of my sisters on beholding me station myself for hours in a garden-chair, among mounds of newly-turned earth, in the plantations I was creating, to experimentalize in acclimatizing trees of Mexican and Caribbean growth, in the glowing soil of the South of France; assuring them that occupation prospered my health, and quoting the assertion of Bacon, which cannot be too freshly remembered by the votaries of country life: "God Almighty first planted a garden; and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks: and man shall ever see, that, when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection."

Hints were sometimes thrown out by the Howard Smiths, touching the folly of wasting large sums upon a foreign villa, of which, after a season I should lose sight and forget the very

will soon ride your hobby to death. Why, oh! why condemn yourself to hard labour and solitary confinement within a span of a dozen acres, when so noble an estate awaits your improving hand at home! — Villa Verde is the prettiest spot I ever saw; but *toujours Villa Verde ne vaut rien.*"

Poor Emily, — or rather *happy* Emily! — for, absorbed in her husband and child and the petty interests to which the name of duty assigned importance, *she* had not been schooled by suffering and mortification into the mood which, like that of the melancholy Jaques, finds solace

> in trees, — books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in every thing.

To me, those contemned twelve acres, even before the ambition of opening a paradise in the wild and surrounding myself with the Mauritian vegetation described by Bernardin de St. Pierre, added another dozen to my territory, contained a little world. So far from exhausting my pleasures, as might be apprehended by superficial observers who, glancing across a flowery lawn and seeing it bathed in sunshine, fancy it must always present the same glaring and monotonous appearance, — every day brought vicissitude — every hour some interesting change. The grey day, the showery, the breezy, interposed between those glowing Midsummer fervours which loaded the tranquil evenings and the sea breezes that freshened them, with more than Oriental sweetness: — the morning twilight, — the serene moonlight, — the evenings when delicious airs came stirring the leaves of my shrubbery as if whispering to their favourite blossoms, — the white moths flitting over the parterres at nightfall like ghosts of departed flowers, — the fire-flies glittering at a later season almost within reach of the waves which the same electricity of atmosphere rendered phosphorescent, — the chirp of the cigala in the grass, — the melancholy gleam of the glow-worm on the moss like a star fallen from the sky and trembling in its unnatural sphere, — all these and a thousand shades and changes, visible only to the privileged eye of the lover of nature, afforded me a world of thoughts, — lying, I dare not use the thread-*bare quotation* of "too deep for tears" — but in that region of

the soul unsusceptible of vibration from the commotion of worldly interests.

Ruminative as a Turk, if I still indulged my propensity for building Castles in the Air, it was in the form of a kiosk overshadowed by the intermingling branches of those star-crowned trees, which, like colossal rose-bushes, adorn the wilds of the Himalaya, the jungles of Java, or the banks of the Xuanquil; the herbage around me being brocaded with nameless flowers, like the gorgeous carpet of the Prairies or the valleys of Japan. In such an Eden, methought I could live happy: — an Eden without an Eve, and consequently without a serpent in the grass! —

My mother, too advanced in years to wander onward through the vale of shadows without a staff, soon discovered the impossibility of getting through her winters without an English chaplain at her elbow to administer to the health of her soul, and an English physician to administer to the health of her body; and regarding me as half a heathen for worshipping in the stillness of my chamber or under the more august canopy of the summer sky, and scarcely more orthodox in submitting to be prescribed for by a leech who "put his faith in Peter," — repaired to Nice every winter to be chilled by the mountain *bise*, and the formalities of Great British tea-tables.

Every summer, however, she came back to me, to inquire with an indulgent smile after the fruiting of my mangoes and pawpaw-trees; — the miraculous powers ascribed to which, by the way, of converting the toughest chickens into the tenderest if buried an hour or two among the roots, I was half inclined to test upon poor Dora, who was progressing more steadily into single blessedness than accorded with *her* taste or my own.

I was not, indeed, yet without hope, that among the valetudinarians who congress every winter at Nice, my sister might find some sentimental convalescent disposed to unite his fortunes with those of a helpmate as much addicted from taste as himself from infirmity, to panada and a family medicine-chest. — When lo! one quiet summer day, she startled me by announcing her betrothal to a retired Colonel of Cuirassiers, who possessed a

bastide within a league or two of Villa Verde, — a *sabreur* who discussed his bottle of Burgundy for breakfast, and whose voice sounded as through a speaking trumpet, so that when whispering soft things to her in a corner, he might have been giving the word of command to his regiment.

I had nothing to say against the match. In addition to the crosses, stars, and scars which impress the government stamp of heroism, the Colonel possessed a solid fortune and character; and though three folio pages would scarcely contain the anathemas vented by the Reverend Smith Howard at her marriage with a Papist, a notion that struck her of Emily's disinclination to have another little Wrottesley make its appearance, to divide with her own the inheritance of its rich uncle, so stimulated her feelings, that the following Sunday the banns were published.

Having long subscribed to the philosophy of letting people be happy after their own fashion, I should have been well content to give her away, — particularly as Colonel de Villemont was obliging enough to discuss his cigars in my forcing-houses whenever there was occasion for smoking out insects. But unluckily, Dora's attendance had become essential to my poor mother, whom she had kept in leading-strings ever since she had left off her own; so that the good old lady, when left unguarded, was easily beguiled by the first specious toady she fell in with the following winter at Nice, into those pitiable excesses of Tractarianism and patent medicines, to which the middle-aged English gentlewoman is apt to fall a victim. A horrible orgie of blue pill, purporting to relieve indigestion produced by doctrinal anxieties, cut short the remnant of her days; and while I sincerely lamented her loss and missed her indulgent and affectionate companionship, it afforded me no small comfort that, for six or eight years past, I had been expiating my early gracelessness by the most deferential attention to her comfort.

In her turn, my poor mother had sincerely recanted her former errors. She admitted having been too chicken-pecked a mother of daughters, to be a just mother to her son; and if it had been decreed her to reap a whirlwind from the wind of her *sowing, thanks* be to Heaven, he had made atonement for his fault.

I never felt more gratified than by a conversation in which I heard her take part with the Archdeacon, whom I tempted over one autumn to visit me, by the promise of ortolans, beccafichi, and shell-fish

Wearing strange shapes, and bearing many names,

unknown to his gastronomic erudition, — to say nothing of corn, wine, and oil, whose ripeness our pallid sun knows only by importation.

When, in reply to her inquiry after the jolly-faced old Yorkshire Baronet, his namesake, whom she had seen in his company at Wrottesley Hall, he mournfully shook his head, I endeavoured to cut short the subject by reminding her how often of late she had noticed the name of Sir Charles Roxborough, as a guest at the fashionable entertainments of London; more especially those of the newly-formed Court of William IV.

"And yet," said I, "one would scarcely have expected to find the Seïd of Oatlands naturalized among the Liberals now in the ascendant!"

"Show me the place in which you would *not* find the fellow," retorted the Archdeacon, "where pence or preferment are to be picked up! I never see those *chiffonnier* rascals in Paris raking the kennel or heaps of rubbish, for the chance of some stray coin or trinket, without likening their dirty occupation to my cousin Charley's. Not but he holds his head high enough, while his hands are groping in the mud. The first to desert the standard he had so long followed, and denounce the frivolous egotism of the late King as having brought the country to the verge of a revolution, Charles Roxborough carried with him into the new camp the empty self-consequence he had acquired in the old. The world, so easily subjected by impudent impostors, took him once more upon trust; and he now passes current as the most gentlemanly of radicals, — a man who, knowing by experience the abuses of society, is the safest of reformers, — just as your ablest police-officer is a reclaimed thief."

"But how do his political pretensions," said I, "square with his engagements on the turf?"

"Oh! Charles is cunning enough to make the cogs of one

calling play into the wheels of t'other!" retorted the Archdeacon. "The Legs are made to believe that no man holding so respectable a position in life, would condescend to the shufflings and subterfuges of which he stands accused; while to his constituents, he represents his companionship with grooms and trainers, as a noble devotion to the national sports of his beloved country!"

"Poor constituents!" said I, shrugging my shoulders.

"Ay, and poor Legs!" retorted the Archdeacon. "The proverbial feat of skinning a flint has been far outdone by Charles Roxborough's, in jockeying the jockeys and taking in the knowing ones. Between him and his confidential biscuit-baker, shabbinesses are constantly perpetrated in the betting-ring, which, attempted in a servants' hall, would bring a footman under the pump."

My poor mother, a woman of peaceful nature, endeavoured to moderate his vehemence.

"You would scarcely plead his cause so warmly, my dear lady," cried he, "did you know by what deep-laid scheming he endeavoured to defraud your son out of his fortune, — his principles, — his reputation, — his standing in the world. The hand of Providence has been hard upon you in some respects, Wrottesley," continued he, more gravely. "But if the burning down of the old Hall, and your consequent loss of health, have been the means of wrenching you out of the company of Sir Charles Roxborough, the chastening of Heaven was the greatest mercy ever vouchsafed you!" —

"Certainly the greatest mercy that could have been afforded to *me!*" said my mother, with deep feeling. "The latter years of my life have been rendered its happiest portion, by the comfort I have enjoyed in my son."

"And in Villa Verde — quiet, happy Villa Verde!" — added I, unwilling to hear myself overpraised.

"Perhaps I might not have been quite so sure of you at Wrottesley Hall," rejoined she with an involuntary smile at my partiality for the creation of my hands. "I did not however expect, Mr. Archdeacon, to find *you*, — a Yorkshireman by *birth and benefice*, — encouraging my son in his expatriation."

"Nor do I, my dear Ma'am, nor do I!" — cried he, eager to rebut such a charge. — "On the contrary, I should like to see him with a good English house over his head, and a good English wife to share it with him: taking part in all the good which his old friends and contemporaries, Lord John and Sir Reginald Stormont, are working for the country. You wouldn't know the neighbourhood, Harry! — roads like gravel walks, — school-houses in every village, — garden premiums in every hamlet. — The people about the Elms, twice as decent as they were in poor Sir Gratians time, are consequently twice as prosperous."

At these encomiums on my enemies, my heart hardened almost as suddenly as in its more generate years.

"And what's more," continued the Archdeacon, "if next session sees the Reform Bill carried through, as in all reason it must, and the borough is disfranchised, a door will be opened to new influences such as will perfect the good work sketched out."

At this suggestion, my heart expanded again, Parliamentary reform was the only worldly vision that still haunted my peaceful shrubberies.

"One of Lord Meadowley's brothers, with a thousand or two of pounds in his hand, would be sure to come in; and who knows but some day or other, we may compass a railroad like our betters!" continued the old gentleman who often made my poor mother's blood run cold by his description of his recent journeys between Liverpool and Manchester.

"But surely," said she, again breaking into the conversation "though Mr. Whichcote may be lukewarm in behalf of his constituents, Sir Charles Roxborough must be disposed to protect in parliament the interests of a neighbourhood where he possesses so large a stake?"

"Not an acre, Ma'am, not an acre!" — retorted the Archdeacon. "What we believed to be a lease to Lord John Jocelyn, was in fact a sale of the Elms to the Duke of Sheffield. At Sir Gratian's death, not a perch of land in Yorkshire could he call his own!"

"A sad mortification!" said I, — "for he was a hospitable

old soul, and a country gentleman at heart. But for the premature loss of his wife what a different man would he have been, and of how different a family, the father!"

"Ay, we might all have been different, if forced by folks wiser and better than ourselves, into the right path!" — was my old friend's rejoinder. "Give me the man who walks uprightly for conscience sake! — However, poor Gratian paid a heavy penalty for suffering himself to be overcrowed at first by a saucy Etonian, and latterly by a worthless *roué*, whom people would call a swindler were his coat out at elbows like his fortune. My cousin Gratian died my pensioner, Sir. — I took him out of the Rules of the Bench, and brought him home to my poor chimney-corner; where his pinched face and childish repinings gave me many and many a heart-ache. — But his pride was steel to the last. — He would have starved rather than let Lady Fortrose know how it was with him. He knew that Adela has a hard life of it with her deer-stalking, grouse-shooting, salmon-fishing gamekeeper of a lord, whose every second word is an oath, and every second draught a glass of whisky; — a selfish brute, who visits upon *her* the slippery tricks played him by her brother."

"And poor Adela, I suppose, is spirit-broken!"

"Worse! — Ill-usage has harassed her into a scold. — Patience is so thoroughly thrown away upon Fortrose, that she seems to fancy herself a privileged Xantippe."

"Caroline was always the sweeter tempered of the two," said I; "Caroline was gentleness herself! — Had her heart ever weaned itself, my dear Archdeacon, from her early attachment, so as to realize the projects of her brother, *she* would not have had to complain of a brutal husband."

"In *you?*" — cried my indignant mother. "I should think not! —The person who complained of *your* temper, Harry, must be, indeed, hard to please! — As I was saying the other day to Colonel de Villemont, I never remember to have heard you raise your voice in speaking to a woman. Your sister and he were predicting that you would live and die a bachelor: and I told them, as I tell every body, that if you were likely to make half *so good a husband* as you make a son, not a woman in France

or England but might pray to God on her knees to become your wife."

An approving nod from the Archdeacon showed me he appreciated the compliment. — Six months afterwards, he was quietly re-established in Yorkshire; and my good old mother in her grave! —

I missed her more than any one will believe who has watched my devious course and deplored my shallow nature. But of all the ties which knit together the frame of society, the holiest and closest is that between parent and child. A perpetual fount of love abides in the fond depths of a mother's heart, supplying indulgence for all our frailties, balm for all our griefs, patience for all our tediousness; — and though my poor mother was far from an oracle, the loss of her kindly smile, her gentle word of affirmation or nod of encouragement, her untiring ear, her unswerving sense of rectitude, created a gap by my fireside such as the whole great world of London and Paris, could never have filled up.

Nay, strange to say, her departure created a chasm betwixt me and my sisters. Now she was no longer there to interpret their actions, and extenuate the little faults of taste of which they and their husbands were guilty, I often grew sadly out of sorts with Colonel de Villemont's brazen lungs and slaps on my back; while the homilies of poor Howard Smith, the very type of moral insignificance, wore me out as "*une obsession fatigante, un ennui plutôt qu'un chagrin, qui m'agaçait les nerfs.*" — Or, why not speak out plainly, — I was beginning to cherish against my two young nephews, — the demure little Wrottesley who seemed born for a silk-apron, and the uproarious little Wrottesley who was always making inroads on my powder-flask, — the sort of jealous antipathy which a man cherishes against his heir-presumptive.

"It seems fated," thought I, one balmy evening under the shade of my mimosas, after Wrottesley II. had been convicted of carrying off the finest stalk of my papyrus for a lance, — Wrottesley I. having been previously accused of conveying to the offices as Jerusalem artichokes, a box of the rarest amaryllis

roots, just arrived from New Zealand. — "it seems fated that the unlucky Wrottesley property shall never descend from sire to son! I almost regret that I did not fulfil my intention at quitting England, and dispose of every dirty acre of the estate. But the dissuasions of Dr. Temple and the Archdeacon, prevailed over my then enfeebled health; and ever since, my natural indolence, and the ease and liberality with which my affairs are managed for me by Gripham, have reconciled me to let matters remain as they are. Should the Reform Bill pass, however, I really think I might be tempted over to admire the crestfallen looks of the Duke of Sheffield, Sir Charles Roxborough, and the rest of the borough-mongers. But after all, the journey would be a bore; and during my absence — (even if the Jardin Botanique, at Marseilles spared me one of its gardeners) — every thing at Villa Verde would go to rack and ruin."

After all, why wander beyond the gates of my Eden? — What was there my house did not afford me? —

> Friends, — books, — the ripple of the summer sea,
> And nature in her cultivated trim
> Dress'd to my taste, inviting me abroad.

I could scarcely go further than Villa Verde without faring worse. —

CHAPTER XXXVI.

> Qu'ai-je fait? — qu'ai-je appris? — Le temps est si rapide! —
> L'enfant marche joyeux sans songer au chemin:
> Il le croit infini, n'en voyant pas la fin.
> Tout à coup, il rencontre une source limpide,
> Il s'arrête, — il se penche, — il y voit un vieillard! —
>
> De Mussrt.

In ancient times the greatest enterprizes were sometimes decided by the flight of a bird. In my own case, what the lectures and prayers of my family had failed to accomplish, was effected by the blooming of a flower! — My Cuirassier brother-in-law, recalled into active life two years after his marriage by the events of the revolution of July by a district appointment comporting with his distinctions in the Imperial Army, was unexpectedly nominated to the Staff of the Duke of Orleans: and no sooner *were my* sister and the new General settled in Paris, than urgent

letters from Dora entreated me to renounce a seclusion where neither mother nor sister remained to watch over my health and spirits.

But I was now too strong on the wing to listen to her croaking. My health and spirits were as firm as those of Hercules — or a beef-eater: *so* firm that, for the last two years, I had consoled myself during the winter months by the pleasures of the chase, for the suspension of my garden labours. My affection for my books and boar-hounds failed, however, to convince her that the new library and kennel added to my establishment at Villa Verde, could suffice for happiness. Madame de Villemont insisted that I could not enjoy my hunting without her husband's companionship, or my books without her own, and after describing with the spirit peculiar to a woman's pen, as though the pretty creatures dipped their crow-quills into effervescent ink, the promising aspect of the court of the Citizen King now that, every feather of the old Phœnix of monarchy being moulted, the new bird in its glorious array of plumage was beginning to clap its wings for an ascent into the sky far nearer the sun than its predecessors had ever accomplished, she summed up the novelties worthy to attract me to Paris, by a description of the new conservatory in the Jardin des Plantes and a catalogue of its contents, which caused me to have my passport *visé* and post-horses put to my carriage.

"*De trop, ou de trop peu, partout dans ce monde!*" said I, as I exhibited the said passport on reaching the *Barrière de l'Enfer.* — "This city, which is supposed to contain the brightest elements of human enjoyment it has been my fortune to enter, first, with a beardless chin which placed me below the level of its initiated, and now, with white hairs in my beard, which form a still more insuperable barrier. The orgie and the theatre have become gross and tawdry diversions to eyes accustomed to the deep tranquillity of the woods and Mediterranean waters; whose fair foam, lining the coast with swansdown, so well attests the fabled birth of Beauty's Queen. Too long a boy, — too late a philosopher, — I have simply missed my tide."

My brother-in-law, who was both fond and proud of me, and

as desirous of attaching me to the soil of France as the Howard Smiths to incite me into laying the foundations of a new Wrottesley Hall, turned a deaf ear to my despondings. Seizing me by the arm as gruffly as a Newfoundland dog takes in its mouth one of its puppies, he walked me off from one end of Paris to the other; — showed me new institutions, — improvements in progress, — and described others still more important in contemplation, — all tending to the melioration of the city, and health and comfort of its citizens. "Don't tell me, my good brother," cried he, in one of his stentorian whispers, "that you have seen Naples, and may therefore die! The Paris of to-day is not the Paris with which you were acquainted. The mincing, painted minx you remember of old, is expiating her vices at the galleys; while the regenerated city has called into existence a class which is beginning to establish the social community of France on a new basis. Progress is the order of the day, my dear Wrottesley; a phase of civilization which has lost nothing in candour and integrity by the acquirement of polish on the surface, and enlightenment within."

I listened, — observed, — applauded; but though cheered by the amended prospects of a great nation, became more puzzled and depressed than ever by my own. The circle of General and Madame de Villemont, composed of the renovated wreck of the celebrities of the Empire, mingled with its regrets over the extinction of the great man's dynasty, such earnest hopes that the Napoleon of peace would establish *his* race more permanently on the throne by the early marriage of his sons and the creation of a numerous succession, that, like them, I began to fancy the best privilege of a man's existence forfeited who bequeaths his havings in this world to

> an unlineal hand,
> No son of his succeeding!

Little did the friends and kinsfolk of young Wrottesley de Villemont conjecture that, while enlarging on the urgency of finding brides for the Ducs d'Orléans and de Nemours, they were convincing *me* that even kings and heroes whose heirs are *heirs presumptive*, lose half their consequence; and that Pierre

or Paul is no better than a tenant for life, who cannot on his death-bed remit the keys of his treasury to a hand of his flesh and blood!

I consoled myself for my cloudy perspective by assiduous visits to the high priests of Parisian floriculture: to the Jardin des Plantes, — to Hardy at the Palace of the Luxembourg, — to Noisette, Tripet, and Laffay; convincing myself by the words of their lips, that Paris and its suburbs afforded nothing to compare with Villa Verde.

A pilgrimage to the old Rue des Tournelles, which had exercised so strange an influence over my destinies, tempted one day my vagrant steps. I was aware that Madame de Valmoré to whom, after the accession of fortune of his niece, Monsieur Des Auliers had thought it right to bequeath the greater part of his property, had accompanied to England after the three Glorious Days, her husband, who occupied a post in the household of Monsieur. But I did not expect to find the place I had left invested with so dignified an air of respectability, thoroughly desecrated. The ground-floor of the fine old mansion, let to a *limonadier*, was converted into a showy café blazing with gilding, vermillion, and floods of gas, under the name of Les Jardins d'Armide: — an orchestra comprising half-a-dozen fiddles, three cornets-à-piston, a brace of pistols, and a leathern strap, being established under the injured branches of the old *vernis du Japon*. On the second floor, if the announcements accompanying the various door-bells were to be trusted, lived a manufacturer of *carton pierre;* on the third, a *professeur de gymnastique;* on the fourth, a *fabricant de dents osanores*, whose pendant sign, a colossal forefanged tooth, was made manifest at night by a blue lantern. On the fifth and sixth, lived a cleaner of kid gloves, and a maker of caoutchouc braces and impermeable clogs; which heterogeneous mass of new fangled rubbish, was the small change for a *conseiller de la cour des comptes* retired from office, living the life of a philosopher and exercising the virtues of a Christian.

Poor old Des Auliers! — What would he have felt could he have witnessed the profanation of the house of his fathers!

Attributing at times my horticultural mania to my discovery at Les Epines of the interest assigned by the cultivation of flowers to the leisure of an idle man, I had often wished, at Villa Verde, I could bring the gentlemanly old man to visit my parterres and green-houses, containing plants as fabulous to *his* imagination as the gem-bearing trees and the magic gardens of Aladdin. But I was now content to let him sleep in peace in his marble alcove in the cemetery of Père La Chaise! *He* would not have entered, like my go-ahead brother-in-law, into the sweeping reforms of the times; *he* would have experienced little pleasure in administering the Code of the Empire under the hybrid constitutional Monarchy engendered by a *mariage de convenance* between England and France. But above all, he would have received a second death-blow from the meretricious transformation of walls within which his father and his father's father saw the light! —

In the spleen of my soul, I could not help hoping Yorkshire might have belied its renown for hospitality on occasion of the visit, or rather visitation, made by Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Valmoré to Sir Reginald and Lady Stormont at the Chase; more particularly when, on inquiring after the present state of Les Epines, I found that the villa was converted into a glue manufactory; that the plantations were cut down, and the grounds to be let on building leases.

Not a trace could I discover, in short, of my former sojourn in that city and among those of whom it is written by one of the liveliest of their modern writers, that "Il n'y a point de climat où l'on s'ennuie si vite d'aimer ou de haïr; où l'on soit plus prompt à s'enthousiasmer, ni plus prompt à s'en repentir; où la baisse soit si près de la hausse, — la banqueroute de la fortune; où, quand on est sublime, on est si près d'être ridicule; où les fêtes et les réputations ont un si brutal lendemain; où la mode dévore d'un égal appetit fidélités, grandeurs, et religions."

I inquired after my friends and companions of other days: — their place knew them no longer. After losing her beauty by the *small-pox*, Princesse Sabine de L. had retired from the world *and become a Sœur de Charité*; while Mélanie de Bonval —

(when deserted for a better *parti* by D'Estomont, for whose sake she had somewhat outraged the severe etiquettes of the Faubourg St. Germain) — had thrown herself away on a Polish Count by whom her fortune was squandered at *roulette;* and was now a distressed miniature painter, with a *ski* tacked to her name, living in a fifth story in the Rue Taranne! Nestor Platicheff was *Chargé d'affaires* at Washington; — Anton Zriny, *Tavernicus* of Hungary; — Count Engelbert and his wife attached to the household of the Archduchess Sophia. —

Not a soul of my former associates but, having selected his road, had pursued it steadily for some specific purpose. I alone was a weed in the great wilderness of life, — I alone a cobweb, waving on a crumbling wall. The fearful epidemic which, two years before, had fastened like a vampire-bat on Paris, sucking the best blood out of its veins, had not left among its long array of tombs a frame more extinct as regards the pursuits and usefulnesses of life, than the enervate egotist who, from his luxurious *entresol* in the Hotel Bristol, surveyed the statue of Napoleon recently inaugurated on its column, and was forced to admit himself so many leagues in arrear of his century.

I was beginning to sicken of the stir and bustle of Paris; not a little augmented in my case by the favour which Dora, as the wife of a *brave de l'Empire* and an English lady of good extraction, commanded at the new Court,—when a letter from Gripham roused me from my lethargy. For so many months past he had been hinting that on the triumph of the Reform Bill, the Hawley interest in the borough of * * * would give place to the popularity of my name and principles that, by one of my customary self-delusions, I had reckoned, though resident abroad, upon being courted to return to England and undertake the representation. What, therefore, was my amazement to find from his present communication that he had been quietly cherishing the Wrottesley interest for a purpose of his own!—My quondam attorney had literally the audacity to inquire whether it would be objectionable to me for his eldest son to stand on my family interest! — *His* eldest son, — GRIPHAM'S!

This was almost as humiliating an instance of the triumphs of

time as the pollution of the sage old lawyer's sober garden by tobacco-smoke, punch, and the *surveillance* of the police! I remembered at my occasional visits to the pouncery of Messrs. Gripham, Klose and Sneak, a gaunt female in a short-waisted scanty gown, with yellow bows in her cap, who used to drop a curtsey, "hope she saw me well," and retire; — to whom my man of business occasionally alluded by the name of "Mrs. G." But that the eldest hope of whom she spake as head boy at the Wakefield Grammar School, should ever take it into his besotted head to sit in Parliament among the leading men of the county, was more than I had ever anticipated!

But the letter had other surprises in store. A railroad was projected between Manchester and Leeds, which would run through the heart of the Wrottesley estate, — nay, which would utterly obliterate the sacred solitude of Wheledale; and Gripham asked permission to forward me a copy of plans and estimates, to guide my decision concerning the terms offered me; hazarding an inquiry "whether any thing would induce me to come over for a week or two now I was so near England as Paris, in order to determine these matters for myself?"

"Grove the engineer, one of the first men of the day, to whom the construction of the line is conceded," added Gripham, "was at my office the other day, and spoke of you, my dear Sir, as an old acquaintance, whose interests might be safely entrusted to his hands."

"Grove the engineer!" — The name carried an air of renown with it. Had Gripham said "*Mr.* Grove," I should have pictured poor Andrew to myself still toiling up the hill of life. But "Grove the engineer" denoted a house and offices in Whitehall Place or Saville Row; perhaps a villa at Roehampton; certainly a wife and family. He had left the surly leather-dresser at the foot of the tree and attained the summit; and Wilsbury (unless Wilsbury itself were now a Roman Catholic college, or an orthopedic institution,) was probably as proud of him as though "Reverend" as well as Andrew were prefixed to the name of "*Grove.*"

On emerging from the reverie into which I was thrown by the *perusal of this* letter, by a sudden effort of resolution I donned my

seven leagued boots, and was in London within three days before a letter from the Villemonts could give notice to Emily and her husband to meet me at Dover, and by officious kindness mar all the pleasantness of my journey.

In the bewilderment of reaching the colossal ant-hill, I could have almost wished for old Charing Cross and old Pall Mall to guide my way to St. James's Street; the chaos of clubs, to make way for which palaces had sunk into the earth, making me shrink into myself like the smallest of pismires. But I was still more startled by its vicissitudes of human transformation; such as finding Hampden converted into a perpetual President in Exeter Hall, a Bishop in all but lawn sleeves,—a setter-to-rights of other people's consciences, and establisher of the faith of nations! — As to Sir Charles Roxborough, M.P., I will not arraign the wisdom of Government by stating in what arduous capacity I found him influencing the legislation of the kingdom. Suffice it that the press has thought proper to enshrine him among our first-rate men; leaving it for the malicious to surmise by what arts and artifices, — what dinners and breakfasts, — he can have contrived to throw dust in the eyes of the press.

Careful to avoid a dangerous approximation to the tail of the comet, I enjoyed a dinner or two among my old friends; heard attributed, without a smile to Sir Reginald Stormont, the foundation of half a dozen learned and scientific associations; and without a sigh to his wife a close approximation to the despotic throne of Fashion. Sir Harbottle Whichcote, (made a Baronet by Peel) was not more completely the right hand man of the Duke of Sheffield, — investing in specious phrase in the Lower House the bigotries His Grace felt entitled to inflict without modification on the patience of his peers, — than Albertine the parasitical honey-suckle entwining its fragrant blossoms round the unsightly and gnarled trunk of the Duchess, his wife.

Poor souls! — How indulgently I smiled upon them from a distance, as I bestrode my hobby on my way to Loddige's or Knight's; — no less than themselves, perhaps, the slave of vanity, in recapitulating to astonished nurserymen the growth of my Mexican and New Zealand gardens, — slips or seeds from which would have made the fortune of any member of their confraternity.

I saw Fortrose, with a red nose and protuberant presence mounted upon the coach-box of a drag in which reclined a faded, middle-aged woman, with three or four children stuffed into the carriage; — in one of whom, as she leaned from the window with

a cloud of auburn curls overhanging her eyes, methought I could trace the heavenly countenance of our dear lost Caroline. — I even thought of riding up and renewing our acquaintance, when the ill-conditioned looking Earl drew up his team in every body's way under the elms near the Serpentine. But the torrent of oaths that burst from his lips when his clumsiness entangled him with the cab of some youngster of the Guards, disgusted me so completely, that I had not courage for the attempt.

I had loitered away so many months in Paris that the spring was already far advanced; my scarlet rhododendrons and blue ranunculuses being probably in their glory in the deserted gardens of Villa Verde, while I was swallowing the dust and smoke of London, stunned by the rumble of its drays, and blinded by the flash and glare of its glittering impositions. After gratifying my curiosity by listening to the humming and ha-ing in the House of one or two of my old college friends, whom the smoothness of parliamentary reports had at a distance deluded me into fancying must have been transformed by magic power into orators,— and in a stroll along Pall Mall to the milk-and-water prose of one or two others, whom well got-up pamphlets deceived me into supposing must have progressed into men of genius, — I found myself so much more solitary in roaring, raving, coaxing, intriguing, London, than in my quiet greenery by the lone sea waves, that, after choaking through my disgusts for a day or two, in hopes that "Grove the engineer" would return from a tour he was making among his great works in progress, — I decided to bear it no longer, and took my way towards the North.

Towards my home! — my home which, now that I was approaching it anew, I felt I had somewhat too precipitately abandoned and somewhat too long neglected. — It was natural that my disappointments should have planted a thorn in my side. But I had no business to cultivate it till it took permanent root in my nature. I had no right to abandon to the care of others the extensive interests which Providence had submitted to my hand.

And how beautiful Old England seemed to me, in my progress to the North! — not as now, a helter-skelter flight by railroad, rendering the landscape a blurred and featureless confusion; but an easy post journey, through fertile leas, where the hay was half up, — half down, — filling the air with fragrance, and the fields with a thriving population; while the chesnut trees *in full bloom* drooped their sturdy branches to meet the feathery *surface of* the seeded grass.

Instead of the dun vegetation of the olive gardens surrounding Villa Verde, — instead of the rigid foliage of the aloe, or twisted stem of the pomegranate, — behold the glorious oaks and beeches, and rich underwood of maple, ash, and hazel, characteristic of my native land! At a distance, the strips of hawthorn hedges sheeted with bloom, gave the fields the appearance of bleaching grounds. The lilac bushes of the gardens, the old apple-trees of the orchards, all that could put forth a flower, from the germander of the brookside to the heather of the highest fell, seemed to have donned its holiday array in honour of my return.

Twelve years of absence had assigned to these things the charm of novelty; for as the proverb hath it, "Nothing new under the sun, but that which has been forgotten." As strange of aspect to the eyes of others as the green fields and fair complexions of England appeared to my own, I warned my servant to discretion, and profited by the incognito afforded by my sunburnt face and exuberant beard, to dine quietly at Wakefield; and I should perhaps have found less fault with a tough fowl and fiery bottle of sherry, had not the inn — I beg its pardon, — the hotel — borne the name of the "Jocelyn Arms," with the bearings of the Duke of Sheffield emblazoned on the sign, with the vermillion and ultramarine gorgeousness of a missal.

But when, after dinner, I strolled through the town, my attention was disagreeably arrested by certain splendid edifices which had arisen during my banishment. Two of them, all stucco and astragal without, and brass and gaslight within, were, of course, gin-palaces; the third was a Doric temple, bearing in gold letters on its entablature, the inscription, COUNTY BANK, and on the lintel of the door a less ostensible label of "Messieurs Sneak, Klose, and Rumblebottom;" while the fourth, on the outskirts of the town was a spacious mansion, half house of business, half villa, the rich furniture of which was apparent through the plate glass windows; beside the double oaken doors of which appeared on one side the name of "MR. GRIPHAM," and on the other, office bell of Messrs. Gripham, Sneak & Klose.

As the two latter gentlemen had long established their domicile in the neighbouring churchyard, I knew to whom exclusively to attribute the splendours before me, from the dining-room window curtains of crimson damask, to the conservatory that overtopped the garden wall; and could not help regarding the riches of my auditor with the same jealous interest with which

Adam may have contemplated the beautiful being abstracted out of his flesh and blood. —

But if I looked in vain for the shabby old offices of my man of business, I was still more surprised by the changes effected in the suburb through which I quitted the town; which, even had I forgotten the circumstance, would have been pointed out to me as my property by the names inscribed in prominent letters on the street corners. There was Wrottesley Crescent, — Wrottesley Place, — Powerscourt Street, and Powerscourt Buildings; Powerscourt House, (a linen-draper's,) and Wrottesley House, (a boarding-school;) while at the commencement of a turnpike road, trim, neat, and varnished like a Dutch toy, stood a toll-gate it was a pleasure to look at, and a toll-house with a model garden, which (saving for the dust) it might have been a pleasure to live in. For three miles to come, every here and there stood rows of neat houses, adjoining a mass of brick with a tall chimney, announcing a factory far less inviting than the toll-house.

At length, these minor tenements disappeared from the landscape; and nothing remained but well-remembered farms half hidden among clustering trees. Still further, nothing but pastures, with here and there among the hedge-rows a few of those grand old timber trees which characterize the English gentleman's estate. "And lo! my foot was upon my own domain, and my name was Wrottesley!"

Resolved, however, to keep the said name to myself, I ordered my postboys and servants to proceed slowly with the carriage to the village, and wait for me at the little inn which had borne for more than a century the name of the Wrottesley Arms, (though the sign attached to it had evidently been painted with the effigy of a White Swan); and whistling as I went, to keep up my courage, walked slowly towards the lodge gates of Wrottesley Hall! —

But that I had long outgrown the novel-reading tendencies of my early years, the romance of my position would probably have sufficed to raise my spirits to its level! —

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Seek we thy once lov'd home?
The hands are gone that cropt its flowers,
Cold is the hearth within its bowers, —
And should we thither roam,
Its echoes and its empty tread
Would sound like voices from the dead. CAMPBELL.

Lest the reader should suspect me of a paltry desire to ape

the weaknesses as well as misanthropy of Byron, I have forborne to confess that in my retirement, or rather during my association with persons extracting full enjoyment of the pleasures of life out of an income twenty times inferior to my own, I had become somewhat of a skin-flint. — "Useless expenditure," was a favourite word with me in all things not immediately relating to my beloved garden.

But though I plead guilty to having systematically instructed Gripham to throw away no money at Wrottesley for ornamental purposes so long as the estate needed improvement, I really think he might have spared a little paint to the richly-scrolled old iron gates, which I found looking as rusty as the locks of Judas; — and though the lodges were now necessarily inhabited by persons to whom the park was let off as grazing ground, he should have remonstrated against their being converted into laundries. On the placard announcing "No thoroughfare," I fully expected to find inscribed "Washing done here."

In accordance with the said announcement, admittance to the park was surlily refused. But a small bribe, and the explanation that I wanted to cut across the bridge into Wheledale, caused the side-gate to creak on its hinges; — and there I was, in the heart of my territory, — amid the long grass of which, a thousand grass-hoppers and crickets were chirping and in its richly crested groves, a thousand birds singing gaily, — as if to greet my return. What a noble sweep of ground, — how open to the summer breezes and sunshine of heaven, — yet, how sheltered from the bleak north, by woods which, to my now contracted sense of proprietorship, seemed all but boundless! —

On reaching the knoll from which the house used to become visible, I stopped short with an almost sickening sensation, — expecting to see the blackened ruins still disfiguring the landscape. But from the spot on which I stood, nothing was apparent but the *façade* of the East wing; which, though materially injured by the fire, and ever since condemned, shut up, and uninhabited, still presented at a distance an imposing appearance; the heaps of stone and rubbish, which were all that remained of the razed walls of the main building, being nearly concealed by a luxuriant growth of elder bushes, brambles, and briony, — the humble vegetation certain to flourish among ruins.

One of the objects which struck me most from the high road near Wakefield, was the completely-filled churchyard of a Wesleyan chapel, the very foundations of which were not laid on

my departure from England. And this overgrowing of the hearth of my old home, this prodigal rendering back from the earth in return for what was consigned to her bosom, filled me with painful reflections. It was many years since I had felt so insignificant, as while contemplating the mournful monument of the blessings I had turned to such poor account.

I literally could not master my emotions sufficiently to approach the spot where my mind's eye felt prepared to see poor old Sir Gratian in his leather gaiters stand whistling to his pointers, as he used when he came to fetch me for an attack on the preserves. — I wanted some one at that moment whose hand would extend itself to clasp my own. — I wanted a friendly shoulder on which to conceal my face, and the struggle of irrepressible emotion. After obtaining some degree of mastery over myself, I took a short cut across the park to the village, by a pathway nearly overgrown, and rang at the Vicarage bell. Many months had elapsed since my last communication with Temple; and unaware of my arrival in England, he was scarcely likely to recognise in a man of mahogany-coloured complexion and grizzled whiskers, the fair-faced fool whom he had seen fling away his prospects of happiness.

"Dr. Temple, Sir, is at Cambridge. The young ladies are walking in the garden," said a grave-looking servant, in answer to my inquiries.

"Be so good as to ask them when the Doctor is expected home," said I.

And the "young ladies" proved to be so near the garden-gate that, struck by the silvery accents of the voice which replied, "Papa will be at home to-morrow. Perhaps the gentleman will leave his name," I renounced my previous purpose, and thought it better to secure a welcome at once by simply announcing myself as "Mr. Wrottesley."

"I thought so, Sir! I beg your honour's pardon, but I thought I remembered the face the moment you spoke to me!" cried the man, who proved to have been a former groom of my own.

And in a moment, Dr. Temple's eldest daughter was apprized, and "Mr. Wrottesley" ushered into the drawing-room; and if ever a tea-table was presided over with the modesty, cheerfulness, and grace which form the best characteristic of an unaffected Englishwoman, it was by the beautiful girl whom I had *left a lovely* child; and who, from early officiation as a mother *to her brother* and sisters, and as mistress to her father's house-

hold, had acquired a gentle self-possession such as more than supplied the place of knowledge of the world.

I perceive my reader's smile. But I shall be greatly obliged to them to keep their smiles to themselves; or how shall I venture to describe the pleasure I found in retracing with Mary Temple the leading events which marked my term of banishment, and occasioned my return?

"I should not have known you, I admit," said she, in reply to my challenge. "But I perfectly remember, Mr. Wrottesley, your long illness here, and how pale and thin you looked when you left your room."

"It was just after the fire," cried Amelia, the second girl, emerging from her concealment behind her sister's shoulder. "Even *I* can remember the great fire, in which poor papa's hair was burnt off, and his hands and face scorched."

"When your carriage drove away," resumed Miss Temple, "I recollect my father and Archdeacon Roxborough agreeing that they should never see you again! It was the first time," added she, with a smile, "I ever heard the expression, 'a church-yard cough;' and the Archdeacon called me a little blockhead for asking what it meant."

Had the Archdeacon been present, I should have perhaps inquired of him what *he* meant by calling so lovely a creature a little blockhead. As it was, his name afforded a text for further inquiries; and I learned with deep regret that the poor old Archdeacon was no longer able to pay his annual visit to the Rectory; and that, disabled by chronic rheumatism, he resided wholly at York, surrounded by the attention and regard of a wide circle of friends.

"My father is on a visit to my uncle Henry, the Master of — Hall," added Miss Temple. "Perhaps you know my uncle Henry, Mr. Wrottesley? He comes here every autumn; and it is such a relief to him to get out of Cambridge, and enjoy his quiet walks and rides with us in Wheledale! — My uncle Henry is so fond of this neighbourhood. He knows every tree, almost every stone, between this and Roxborough Elms!"

Ay, gentle Mary! — because *one* stone between Wrottesley Rectory and Roxborough Elms, covers the dust of all that is dearest to him on earth: for though now one of the pillars of the Anglican Church and marked for a mitre, nothing of worldly interest, nothing of learned distinction, has ever effaced from his memory those happy hours when he looked forward to feed his

lovely wife and future household with bread of his own earning, — and hope was the light of his life, — and love was all in all! —

When my friend, the Doctor, returned on the morrow from visiting the brother of whom he had always been so fond, and was now so proud, he found me once more established under his roof; his three girls almost as familiar with their uncouth, foreign-looking guest, as with uncle Henry himself. He welcomed me just as I could have wished. By not reproaching me *too* severely for my absenteeism, he disposed the stray sheep to return to its fold.

"Henry and I were talking of you only yesterday," said he, as soon as we were alone. "There is a poor woman named Nixon in the Cambridge workhouse, who became an idiot from the ill-usage of her husband, on whose account he occasionally receives benefactions from Grove, the celebrated engineer. A short time ago, Grove himself passed through, and had an interview with my brother; who was mentioning yesterday with what affection he spoke of his old friend, — with what regret of his long exile!" —

Nancy Nixon! — Poor wretch! But it was not Grove the engineer, of whose charity she ought to have been the object.

"And do you see much of the Stormonts?" said I, anxious to discover whether my former flame were likely to fall in my way.

"They pass their winters in Paris, — their summers in London," he replied. During the autumn months, the sportsmen who crowd with them to Hawley Chase, render it too gay a place to be a safe resort for girls so young as mine. Lady Stormont is, and has always been, all kindness to us; — but the habits my daughters might acquire from her society, would be ill-suited to their situation in life. There is a Miss Stormont, a cousin of Sir Reginald's, often visiting there, who, though no longer young, is a person whose habits and manners are far from a safe model."

"Rose Stormont!"

"Exactly, — a noisy, rouged, dashing, fox-hunting woman, whose intimacy with her cousin Sir Reginald causes much scandal in the county; — more particularly as two out of her three sisters have been heroines of an elopement, — the one from her parents, — the other from her husband. The Stormont blood, I am afraid, does little honour to its high extraction. But enough of what will lead you to suppose that in my old age, I am grown scandalous!" —

"*One word*, however," said I, "before we drop the discussion *of those whose* conduct makes it difficult to mention them with

charity. Do you ever hear or see anything of Sir Charles Roxborough?" —

"I heard him deliver what was considered a very fine speech when I was in London, two years ago, in the Debate upon penal colonization; and last year, (my girls who accompanied Lady Fortrose to Doncaster Races) saw him in great force, after winning the Leger with a grandson of his famous mare 'Miss Jenny.' But for years past, Lord Fortrose has permitted no communication between his wife and her brother."

"The only wise action of his I ever heard of!"

"The world thinks otherwise. Lord Fortrose is so rough a diamond — if diamond one can call him — that the world sides with the polished gentleman who, because his irregularities assume so much method as to appear almost regular, is considered a reformed man. A single one of Sir Charles' speeches contains morality enough to set up the copybooks of half-a-hundred national schools: and I am told he is likely to marry the daughter of a wealthy dowager, whose conquest he made as Chairman of a meeting for the conversion of his old friends, the Jews!" —

"Roxborough would never have adopted the vocation of a philanthropist, unless certain it would pay!" said I, with deep-felt contempt for his hypocrisy, and for myself, as having been its dupe. And from *him* it was easy to turn to the man who had first warned me against him, — to Gripham. — Impossible to forbear a fling at the Brummagem splendours of my flourishing representative! —

"I see little of Mr. Gripham," replied the good doctor, with sudden stiffness, "unless when the interests of my parishioners bring us into contact."

"You could tell me no worse news of him!" cried I, — for in point of fact it was Dr. Temple's testimony which first availed to remove my prejudices against him.

"Do not, however, imagine that the coolness between us has been produced by any change in my good opinion," said Dr. Temple, earnestly aware of having, on a former occasion, pleaded successfully in his favour.

"Yet you are not the man, my dear Doctor, to be actuated by caprice!"

"I trust not! But it is only justice to tell you the exact truth. Gripham chooses to resent my rejection of the suit of his son, — or rather my daughter Mary's rejection. For it was a repugnance

purely personal. Wrottesley Gripham's fortune and situation in life, are even beyond what we pretend to."

"*Wrottesley* Gripham!" cried I. "The mania for converting that name into a Christian one seems to be epidemic. *This* Wrottesley, I presume, is the would-be Member of Parliament?" —

"Precisely. — It was one of the advantages of the connection especially insisted upon. But had he a prospect of sitting in the Upper House instead of the Lower, my girl would have entertained the same distaste for his flippant and forward vulgarity."

I contemplated Mary Temple with all the more interest when we met at the dinner-table, where, fifteen years before, I had seen her a little rowly-powly thing, climb upon her father's knees at dessert. It was something for one of the three portionless daughters of a poor parson, to have refused a man on whom his father offered to settle two thousand a-year. But the more I saw of her, the more I felt convinced that she was right. Miss Temple was twenty times too good for the mansion with the brass plate on the door. There was an innate elegance about her, an ease in all her movements, an intelligent intonation in her very voice, that disposed one at first sight in her favour. And when I came to know her better, and discovered all she was to her father, all she had been to her sisters, to the village, and the poor, — my heart swelled so painfully at the idea of what I and Wrottesley Hall might have become had such a being condescended twelve years before to become our guardian angel, that, for the time, I became conscious of the grievance of having a sprinkling of snow upon my head, and symptoms of gout in my constitution.

How soon it occurred to me after my arrival to entreat the hospitality of the Doctor for my friend Grove, on pretence of consulting him about the impending railroad, but in reality to beg him to make out estimates of the cost of rebuilding Wrottesley Hall, is no affair of the reader. It was not fear of the expense which made me hesitate in the undertaking; for notwithstanding my jealousy of Gripham's display of prosperity, I was forced to admit that, after clearing every shilling of incumbrance from the estate and effecting all its improvements, I had a surplus of six years' income safely invested, to expend on the rebuilding of my house. But where would be the use of wasting time and tens of thousands on the construction of a palace for Mr. Wrottesley Smith or Monsieur le Baron Wrottesley de Villemont *to reside* in, or perhaps for Mr. Wrottesley Gripham to *hire at their hands*? I must first be sure of a sufficient induce-

ment for renouncing my palm-trees and peepul-trees. I must first feel certain of my own vocation for undertaking that advocacy of the public interests of my district which my friend Gripham was for entrusting to his jackanapes of a son.

"All leather and prunella, my dear Wrottesley!" cried my now hearty and happy friend Grove, as we discussed the matter frankly together. "In the wantonness of self-will, you have given yourself up to your whims, till they have frittered away your life into shreds and patches. You have learned indeed from the holy schooling of nature to appreciate the greatness and goodness of *her* Creator and your own. But the lesson is worth nothing unless you apply its inculcations to the matter-of-fact business of life. Luckily it is not too late to give up building Castles in the Air and lay the foundation of a substantial dwelling-house. And why should the want of a wife or a constituency obstruct your projects? Take my advice! — Establish yourself comfortably in a Wrottesley Hall adapted to the requirements of the climate and limits of your fortune; and when people see you are determined to begin life in earnest, neither the love of woman nor confidence of man will be wanting."

Grove had a right to address me with authority; for he was now not only a substantial householder, but by a loving wife and lovely children had given hostages to fortune. *He*, too, had got a little fair haired Wrottesley! —

"Ever since we parted," said he, "my life has been a task of striving and thriving. — I have already as good an income as I can enjoy, and more work than I can do; though to lighten my labours I have lately taken into partnership my sister Bessie's husband, formerly my clerk. Belle is married to one of her cousins, — a capital farmer, by whose intelligence the value of Wilsbury is doubled; — though to be sure the snug house which I built for them on the site of the old farm, must be taken into account. If I had not so many nephews and nieces in addition to my own half-dozen," said he cheerfully, "I promise you I would leave the golden-leafed laurels of the railroad era to be gathered by my friend Brunel, — shut up shop, — and cross my hands for the rest of my days."

"Not till you have established a clerk of the works at Wrottesley Hall, if you please!" cried I, cheered by the influence of his sanguine spirit. "Henceforward, I will build no Castles but such as can be put together with mortar and a trowel."

It will scarcely be doubted that, in such plans, I was warmly

encouraged by my friends. — And the daily-improving prospects of the country added new sunshine to my own. For nearly three years, the rebuilding of the house occupied my whole attention. With the exception of a single autumnal excursion to Villa Verde, (at the close of which I presented the estate to young de Villemont, as a pleasant appendage to his father's hereditary property in the neighbourhood,) I have not once quitted the farm-house in Wrottesley village where I established myself to supervise my workmen, and where I have diverted my leisure evenings by enditing the foregoing confessions.

Of my motive for undertaking the task, I am not over-certain. — Perhaps I was in hopes that the frank confession of my past follies might do somewhat to soften the adverse sentence of Mary Temple; who, in reply to my schemes of future happiness, has more than once pronounced "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel!" —

I *will* excel, however, and Mary shall own it! The effervescence of my youth is past: but the calm contentment of riper years will leave me nothing to regret. After the approaching election, I am to write myself down M.P., and commence my arduous duties as a servant of the country.

From those to whom much is given, much shall be required; and but for the years of study which have ripened faculties dwarfed by excess of premature sunshine, I should tremble at the responsibility of taking a part in that mighty congress which is labouring with all its energies to assign to England the leading place in European civilization.

Meanwhile, I am to celebrate my housewarming. In the course of a few months, the upholsterers will have rendered the new Hall as comfortable within as it is already elegant and imposing without; when I may boast of possessing one of the finest seats in the kingdom.

I would fain invite such of my readers as have followed me indulgently to the end, to witness my installation, (which I promise them shall be worthy the far-famed hospitality of the West-Riding,) but that I am afraid they would accuse me in return, of recurring to my old weakness of building CASTLES IN THE AIR! —

THE END.

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